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DUNGEON

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DUNGEON®

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ABOUT THE COVER: *Chris Seaman illustrates the diabolical leader of a fiendish assassins' guild that threatens gods and mortals alike in "Blades of the Stygian Masque."*

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Twilight

By Christopher Perkins

As far as the ezines are concerned, we've entered the twilight of 4th Edition game support. As previously announced, the ezines are going on hiatus beginning in January, and we have just enough publishable 4E content left to fill the next three issues. There will be one more digital tools update in the new year, and after that, all of our in-house resources will be focused on D&D Next. That, in my opinion, is a good thing.

We know from past experience how difficult it can be to keep the magazines running during the transition period between editions. I was working on the print magazines during the transition from 2nd Edition to 3rd Edition, and I also oversaw the transition from v.3.5 (print) to 4th Edition (digital). As you can imagine, it's hard to pump out old-edition content while simultaneously creating and mastering a new edition. At some point, we, as responsible custodians of the D&D brand, have to take a step back and ask what's best for the game. Do we keep chugging out 4th Edition content at the risk of taking resources away from D&D Next development? How soon after the launch of D&D Next do players and DMs need the article and adventure support that the magazines provide? The answers to these questions (and others) are what led us to certain decisions.

Even though the ezines are going on hiatus while we focus our attention on the launch of the next edition, D&D Insider™ subscribers will continue to have access to the online tools and all of the magazine back issues going back to the launch of 4th Edition. That includes over 60 issues of *Dungeon*. If you're looking for adventures to pad out your 4E campaign, you could do a lot worse than plunder these back issues for ideas. There's even an entire adventure path (*Scales of War*), if you haven't already played through it. By the time December rolls around, 4th Edition players and DMs will not be lacking for content. The website is flush with 4E articles and adventures. If you look at all of the magazine content published online in the past five years, that's a ton of stuff. True, we never got around to publishing an article about using rodents as missile weapons, or an adventure featuring lava children. *Oh, well.* Every edition comes with blank spots on the map and roads left unexplored.

So, before the magazines go dark for a while, let's bask in the twilight. This month, to celebrate the Halloween season, we have three adventures plucked from the demented minds of writers who are annured to the screams of horrified players. *Dark Legacy of Evard*™ is the last D&D Encounters™ season we're republishing in *Dungeon*, and it's a fantastic adventure to run this time of year, when the ghouls and goblins are out and about. "The Star-Touched Grove" (by first-time contributor Tyler Gelvin) is great for a single night's play, and it features some creepy new monsters that are sure to make your players scream with laughter. Finally, we have "Blades of the Stygian Masque," our last epic-tier adventure. This one is guaranteed to terrify even nigh-invincible characters, as they come face-to-face with a god-slaying assassins' guild from the Nine Hells.

Scary stuff. Enjoy!

Blades of the Stygian Masque

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 25-27

By Will Doyle

Illustration by Chris Seaman

Cartography by Mike Schley

The assassins of the Stygian Masque unleash the *howling daggers* only for their most illustrious victims. A hooded skeleton delivers the Hangman card from the Vistani *tarokka* to the doomed one's doorstep. Such a messenger has now been witnessed on the threshold of Aurosion, Pelor's shining palace in the city of Hestavar. The Stygian Masque has taken on the most exalted target of all: a god.

Locked within the Hall of Tragedies, the hundred *howling daggers* await their impending assignment. Only the bravest heroes might dare to visit the Nine Hells and destroy the infernal daggers before they can be released.

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Background

The Stygian Masque is a clan of assassin devils, answerable only to Asmodeus, that sells death to the highest bidder. The clan is based in the Hall of Tragedies, a haunted theater on the fifth layer of the Nine Hells.

The Stygian Masque takes grotesque pleasure in its work and is feared throughout the Nine Hells for its effectiveness. Dressed in showy carnival attire, its members eschew any pretense of secrecy, boldly laying claim to each kill. With the *howling daggers* at the Masque's disposal, few wronged by the Masque dare seek retribution.

The assassins' legendary daggers were crafted from the chains imprisoning the primordial Mual-Tar. When one of these chains snapped, its broken links were smuggled out of the Elemental Chaos and sold on the black markets. Recast as weapons in the Nine Hells, the hundred blades fell into the possession of the assassin devils, and now number among the few weapons capable of slaying a deity. Wielded as one unit, they've been used to topple empires, behead armies, and ruin kingdoms.

From his torture dens deep beneath the earth, the entrapped god Torog has long plotted against Pelor, the god of the sun and healing. Cursed to dwell below, the King that Crawls has come to believe that slaying Pelor will break the enchantments binding him to the Underdark. But Torog cannot strike the sun god, so he hired assassins to do so on his behalf. If all goes according to plan, Contessa Volto of the Stygian Masque will drive the *howling daggers* into the sun god's heart, bringing about an age of darkness.

Running the Adventure

This adventure will test the mettle of even the toughest 25th-level parties. Encounters are intentionally difficult, and the *howling daggers* create unpredictable perils during combat.

Involving the Heroes

The heroes are asked to break into the Hall of Tragedies, steal the *howling daggers*, and deliver them to the priests of Pelor for ritual destruction. Impart this mission through a trusted cleric, an exarch of Pelor, or one of the god's many angels. Players who agree are assigned the following quest.

MAJOR QUEST: DESTROY THE DAGGERS
25th-Level Major Quest (7,000 XP per character)

The characters earn this quest reward if they deliver the hundred *howling daggers* to their patron.

Pelor's emissary can reveal most of the knowledge noted above in the "Background" section, but he or she does not know who hired the Stygian Masque. Adventurers who uncover this information during their quest are promised additional rewards, such as rare magic items, an audience with Pelor, or a powerful divine boon.

Pelor does not fear the Stygian Masque, but he wishes the assassins punished for their impertinence. His emissary directs the adventurers to Sigil, where a spy for the assassins is said to operate from a rundown antiques store. With the Hall of Tragedies hidden behind powerful Forbiddance rituals, interrogating this spy seems like a good place to start.

Adventure Overview

This adventure is structured around three acts. The first takes place in Sigil, where the heroes track down the clan's spy and pressure him for information about the Stygian Masque. Magic mirrors serve as portals to the Nine Hells and provide the party's first brush with their enemy.

The second act takes place in the training grounds beneath the Hall of Tragedies. Here the *howling daggers* must be pried from the assassins' grasp, until all hundred are almost in the heroes' possession. The heroes must slay the Grandmaster of Assassins to retrieve the final dagger, but they can only summon her using a ritual hidden in the assassins' inner sanctum.

The third act culminates in the auditorium, where the summoning ritual must be performed on the stage. When the ritual is complete, the final confrontation with the grandmaster takes place.

Howling Daggers

The hundred *howling daggers* are haunted by the tormented souls of their victims. During combat, they swirl around their wielder in horrifying swarms, each blade vying for the killing stroke. The daggers fly wild if their wielder falls, each lashing out at all nearby until called to heel by someone speaking its secret name.

Commanding the *howling daggers* is an opportunity for the players. The blades might prove vital to survival, but one mistake sends them screaming against their allies. As more *howling daggers* are amassed, the characters must gamble with how many they dare to wield.

Howling Dagger Epic Level

A tortured devil's face shrieks from the pommel of this broad-bladed dagger as it flies around on its own.

Artifact: Wondrous Item

Property

- ✦ The dagger cannot be wielded as a weapon or implement.
- ✦ Unless sheathed, the dagger floats in its space and emits a shriek as audible as a screaming human.
- ✦ The dagger must be unsheathed for its powers to be used.
- ✦ The dagger is either bound or unbound. If an unbound dagger is within 10 squares of you, then you can take a minor action to make a DC 29 Arcana or Intimidate check. If you succeed, you render any unbound *howling dagger* within 10 squares of you bound to you, up to a number of *howling daggers* equal to your check result. If you fall unconscious or die, any unsheathed *howling dagger* bound to you becomes unbound.

Attack Power ✦ At-Will (Free Action)

Trigger: An enemy within 5 squares of you is hit by your attack.

Effect: Each *howling dagger* bound to you deals the triggering enemy 1 damage, flying up to 5 squares to the target, then returning to your space.

Utility Power ✦ At-Will (No Action)

Trigger: A creature starts its turn within 5 squares of the dagger while the dagger is unbound.

Effect: The dagger flies up to 5 squares and deals the triggering creature 1 damage, then the dagger flies back to the space in which it started.

Howling Bandolier Level 25 Uncommon

This long baldric has many loops for small weapons, such as daggers.

Wondrous Item 625,000 gp

Property

This bandolier can hold any number of light thrown weapons, although only twenty such items are visible and available to be manually drawn at any one time.

Utility Power ✦ At-Will (Minor Action)

Effect: You draw any number of items stored in the bandolier.

Treasure

This adventure uses the treasure parcel system and assumes a 25th-level party composed of five characters. Treasures are suggested in the text, but DMs can use the following key to allocate their own parcels:

Parcel 1: The Masquerade (Act III, Auditorium)
Parcel 2: Inner Sanctum (Act II, Location 8)
Parcel 3: Midnight Ballroom (Act II, Location 3)
Parcel 4: Three-Baron Alley (Act II, Location 4)
Parcel 5: Horror from the Mirrors (Act I, Ragatromo's Store)
Parcel 6: Inner Sanctum (Act II, Location 8)
Parcel 7: King's Court (Act II, Location 7)
Parcel 8: Breaking Inside (Act I, Ragatromo's Store)
Parcel 9: Nightingale Floor (Act II, Location 2)
Parcel 10: The Masquerade (Act III, Auditorium)

A set of powerful masks takes up the top five treasure slots. If you don't wish to allocate these masks as treasure, keep the masks in the adventure but remove their magical properties. Ritual scrolls and components found as treasure for use within the adventure don't count toward the treasure parcels.

Act I: Mirrors of Sigil

The mysterious Ragatromo sells mirrors from a store in Sigil's Guildhall Ward. Few know that the tiefling's merchandise links to the Plane of Mirrors, providing wormholes for the assassins to crawl through.

Getting to Sigil

One cannot simply teleport into Sigil. Instead, characters must pass through its portals using specialized gate keys. If they haven't visited Sigil before, Pelor's emissary can direct them to the nearest gate-town.

Once in Sigil, the characters need a successful DC 29 Streetwise check to find Ragatromo's store.

Dealing with the Spy

Ragatromo's store is nestled in the backstreets, far from the city's main thoroughfares.

When the characters arrive, read:

Rain falls drearily over Sigil, draping its streets in a wet haze. The store, a narrow building flanked by tight alleyways, looms on a corner ahead. Dripping gargoyles leer from its steepled roof, and its high windows are shuttered. A cracked mirror dangles from chains attached to a signpost above the front door.

Ragatromo is a powerful necromancer and loyal servant of the Stygian Masque. He lays the groundwork for their assassinations, using Sigil's gates to smuggle mirrors between the planes and animating skeletons to deliver their dreaded warnings. As payment, he's received a bloodstone ring that prevents his body from aging, allowing him to continue his studies well beyond his years.

Ragatromo is fiercely loyal to his masters, but he lives in constant fear of them. He dreads the day his usefulness ends, and a skeleton brings a Hangman's card to his door.

Ragatromo	**Level 25 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling	XP 7,000
HP 230; **Bloodied** 115	**Initiative** +16
AC 39, **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 37	**Perception** +20
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Resist 15 fire	

Traits

Undead Master ✦ Aura 10
If a living humanoid dies in the aura, a skeletal ravager appears in its space at the start of Ragatromo's turn. The ravager acts just after Ragatromo in the initiative order, and it lasts until the end of the encounter or until Ragatromo drops below 1 hit point.

Standard Actions

Balefire Touch (fire, necrotic, teleportation) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 21 fire and necrotic damage, and Ragatromo teleports the target up to 5 squares.

Finger of Death (necrotic) **✦ Recharge** if this power misses
Attack: Ranged 5 (one bloodied creature); +28 vs. Fortitude
Hit: Necrotic damage equal to the target's bloodied value.
Miss: Necrotic damage equal to the target's healing surge value.

Summon Skeletons ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
Effect: Close burst 10. Six skeletal ravagers appear in the area. A ravager acts just after Ragatromo in the initiative order, and it lasts until the end of the encounter or until Ragatromo drops below 1 hit point.

Triggered Actions

Balefire Wrath (fire, necrotic) **✦ Recharge** when first bloodied
Trigger: An enemy within 10 squares of Ragatromo hits him with an attack.
Effect: The triggering enemy takes ongoing 20 fire and necrotic damage (save ends).
Aftereffect: Ongoing 10 fire and necrotic damage (save ends).

Skills Arcana +26, History +26

Str 14 (+14)	**Dex** 19 (+16)	**Wis** 26 (+20)
Con 22 (+18)	**Int** 28 (+21)	**Cha** 18 (+16)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Equipment black robes, bloodstone ring

Skeletal Ravager	**Level 25 Minion Brute**
Medium natural animate (undead)	XP 1,750
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +21
AC 37, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 36	**Perception** +18
Speed 6	Darkvision
Immune disease, necrotic, poison, sleep	

Standard Actions

Slam ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 20 damage (or 25 damage if the creature is grabbed by the ravager), and the target is grabbed (escape DC 29).

Triggered Actions

Boneshard Burst ✦ Encounter
Trigger: The ravager drops below 1 hit point.
Attack (Free Action): Close burst 1 (creatures in the burst); +28 versus Fortitude
Hit: 15 damage, and the target falls prone.

Str 25 (+19)	**Dex** 28 (+21)	**Wis** 23 (+18)
Con 20 (+17)	**Int** 9 (+11)	**Cha** 9 (+11)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Breaking Inside

Exploration Encounter

Ragatromo operates behind a screen of magical alarms, and his store is riddled with portals to the Hall of Tragedies.

Outside the Store

The store has no windows on its ground floor, and its outer doors are kept locked and bolted at all hours (Athletics DC 29 to force).

Gargoyle Guardians: The building's gargoyles alert Ragatromo to any attempted break-ins. The stone face inside the store calls out a warning if the gargoyles spot strangers climbing the walls, lingering in the yard, or tampering with the doors.

Each gargoyle guardian has Perception +19 and darkvision. Characters passing by might notice that the gargoyles' heads turn to keep the characters in sight (Perception DC 29). A character adjacent to a gargoyle can permanently disable the magical sensors in the gargoyle's eyes with a successful DC 29 Arcana or Thievery check.

Sewers: The sewers beneath the store are accessed from a manhole in the rear alley. Only Small or smaller characters can squeeze through the drains into Ragatromo's kitchen. Once through, such a character can remove the gratings with a successful DC 22 Thievery check to provide access for larger heroes.

Yard: Walls (Athletics DC 20 to climb) 15 feet high surround the back yard.

Ground Floor

The storeroom floor is where Ragatromo conducts business with his few clients.

When the characters enter the store, read:
Dusty framed mirrors of all shapes and sizes crowd the store's walls. The air is cold, and the candles give off very little light and warmth: Your breath puffs out in clouds. A grinning stone face is mounted near the kitchen door, next to a rickety flight of stairs.

Mirrors: The store's unnatural cold emanates from the mirrors, which serve as portals to the Hall of Tragedies. Characters need specialized gate keys to activate these portals—assassins' masks—without which it is impossible to discern their true purpose.

Stone Face: The stone face calls out a warning if the gargoyles spot trouble outside. Its hollow voice is heard throughout the building, immediately alerting Ragatromo.

Upper Floor

The upper floor is also crowded with mirrors. Ragatromo is usually in his study, researching the mysteries of the cosmos.

When the characters enter the study, read:
The walls in here are plastered with a baffling array of arcane formulae and planar maps. Hundreds of oddities line the shelves: children's dolls, rusted keys, puzzle boxes, and more. Each has its own carefully coded label.

Flickering candles cast dancing shadows across a table piled with magical paraphernalia. A deck of fortune telling cards is spread in a mystic pattern over its surface. Beside them is a leather-bound journal.

Arcane Paraphernalia: The items on the table are used for the study and practice of necromancy. A set of heavily notated ritual scrolls lie amid the clutter, and these include the following rituals: Find Traps, Object Reading, History Revealed, Planar Portal, Planar Sending, Speak with Dead, and Undead Servitor. Characters searching the table can also gather magical components and reagents worth 6,850 gp.

Cards: Ragatromo uses the Vistani *tarokka* to guide his studies. His current reading uses the Eight of Stars, the Necromancer, as its focus, but the last card, his future, is facedown. It is the Broken One, a card representing calamity and ruin.

Journal: This leather-bound journal details Ragatromo's dealings with the Stygian Masque. For the heroes, it explains how the Hall of Tragedies can be found, and how to use the *howling daggers* (see "Questioning Ragatromo"). The journal is written in code and can be deciphered only by using a ritual or with a DC 38 Arcana check.

Keys: Ragatromo has acquired hundreds of gate keys over the years, each attuned to a different portal within Sigil. His journal describes where each portal can be found, and it lists which keys are required to open them. Gate keys are valuable in Sigil, and the entire haul is worth 1,625 pp.

Questioning Ragatromo

Roleplaying Encounter

Characters might wish to approach the store by posing as clients. Although he's wary of strangers, Ragatromo won't risk blowing his cover by refusing them business.

If the characters knock on the door, read:
A pale tiefling bearing the swirling tattoos of a Vistani soothsayer answers the door. His hair is pure white, and he wears a glittering ring set with a single bloodstone.

The storekeeper gazes at each of you in turn before speaking. "Greetings," he whispers. "If it is mirrors you seek, I have them in abundance."

Ragatromo shows any potential buyers around the store. His mirrors were gathered from distant planes, and he claims that those who use them sometimes see their future reflected in their depths. Most are covered in dust and cobwebs, suggesting that the store doesn't see much business.

Ragatromo clams up if asked about the assassins, curtly denying any accusations and demanding that his visitors leave the premises at once. If they refuse, he turns his dark magic against them.

Those who succeed on a DC 29 Insight check notice that Ragatromo toys nervously with his bloodstone ring as he talks. A character who is trained in Arcana can identify the ring as magical with a successful DC 29 Arcana check. Ragatromo ages rapidly if the ring is removed, and he says anything to get it back.

How are you connected to the Stygian Masque?
"I am a scholar . . . an explorer of the planes. I delved too deep into the Plane of Mirrors . . . and they found me. Now we have a deal . . . I help them find their marks, and they . . . give me life."

Where is the Hall of Tragedies?
"It . . . it is on the frozen shores of Stygia, the fifth of the Nine Hells. You can get there through the mirrors. The Masque uses the hall to train new blood . . . and store their *howling daggers*. It is . . . a place of death."

Who hired the Stygian Masque to kill Pelor?
"I know not . . . I swear! The five masters handle the contracts, not I. It is said this assignment came to the Contessa alone: their grandmaster. A rare thing. The client must be very powerful."

How do we get the *howling daggers*?
"Some are carried by the assassins. Others are held in the training ground beneath their hall: the Path of Blades. Very dangerous. You go there, you don't return."

How do the mirrors work?
"You need an assassin's mask. Carry one with you, and the portals shall open."

Ragatromo can provide more answers at your discretion, revealing the names of the five masters or explaining the basic properties of the *howling daggers*. He hasn't fully explored the hall, so he knows its layout only in broad strokes.

Horror from the Mirrors

Level 28 Combat Encounter (70,000 XP)

The Stygian Masque is quick to deal with those who threaten its secrets. Run this encounter if the heroes injure Ragatromo, uncover his journal, or linger too long in front of his mirrors.

Light: Dim (candles)

Monsters: 6 reapers of despair (each wearing a grimacing assassin's mask), 2 reapers of glee (each with 5 *howling daggers* and a *howling bandolier*, as well as a grinning assassin's mask)

When the assassins come, read:
The candles dim, flare, then dim again. Temperatures plummet, and a rime of ice crawls over the floor from the direction of the mirrors.

Spindly limbed figures start squirming through the mirrors' surfaces, their faces hidden behind leering theater masks. Shrieking broad-bladed daggers erupt into the air as two creatures emerge, and the blades begin whirling around them.

The assassins attack any intruders inside the store. Ragatromo sides with the assassins if he's present, hoping to win favor with his dark masters.

6 Reapers of Despair	**Level 25 Brute**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 7,000 each
HP 280; **Bloodied** 140	**Initiative** +19
AC 37, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 36	**Perception** +18
Speed 10	Darkvision
Resist 25 fire	
Traits	
☼ **Misery's Company** (psychic) ✦ **Aura** 2	
An enemy that starts its turn in the aura must end its turn in the aura or take 15 psychic damage.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Pain Flail** (psychic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 21 damage (5d10 + 31 damage if the reaper scores a critical hit), and ongoing 15 psychic damage (save ends).	
Minor Actions	
Cloak of Despair (illusion) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Effect: The reaper is invisible to anyone taking ongoing psychic damage until the reaper hits or misses with an attack, or until the end of the reaper's next turn.	
Skills Stealth +24	
Str 28 (+21) **Dex** 25 (+19) **Wis** 23 (+18)	
Con 20 (+17) **Int** 17 (+15) **Cha** 18 (+16)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal	
Equipment leather armor, flail	

2 Reapers of Glee	Level 25 Elite Lurker
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 14,000 each
HP 346; **Bloodied** 173	**Initiative** +25
AC 39, **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 37	**Perception** +18
Speed 10	Darkvision
Resist 25 fire	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Standard Actions

Shadow Claw (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 6d6 + 21 necrotic damage (plus 6d6 necrotic damage if the target is granting combat advantage to the reaper), and the target is slowed (save ends).

Hysterical Shadows (psychic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +28 vs. Will
Hit: 3d6 + 17 psychic damage, and the target falls prone. The target also takes ongoing 15 psychic damage (save ends). The target cannot stand up while taking the ongoing psychic damage.

Minor Actions

Shadow Cloak (illusion) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: The reaper is invisible until it hits or misses with an attack, or until the start of the reaper's next turn.

Skills Intimidate +22, Stealth +27

Str 21 (+17)	**Dex** 28 (+21)	**Wis** 23 (+18)
Con 17 (+15)	**Int** 17 (+15)	**Cha** 21 (+17)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Equipment leather armor

First Mistress

Level 27 Combat Encounter (55,000 XP)

Mistress Moretta arrives to finish the job if her cohorts fail. Run this battle shortly after the first, allowing a short rest at your discretion.

Light: Dim (candles)

Monsters: Mistress Moretta (who has 10 *howling daggers* and a *howling bandolier*, as well as the *Moretta Mask*), Stygian slayers (worth no XP when summoned by Moretta)

When Mistress Moretta appears, read:

Ragatromo utters an unearthly gasp. Darkness pours from his eyes, coalescing into the form of a blue-skinned woman wearing black leathers and a round-eyed face-mask. Nearly a dozen howling daggers erupt into the air around her.

Mistress Moretta bound Ragatromo's soul to the Plane of Mirrors, creating a failsafe so he could never escape her reach. Receiving her through the reflections in his eyes causes no damage to Ragatromo, but stuns him for the first round of combat. Mistress Moretta appears in an unoccupied space adjacent to Ragatromo. If he isn't present, she instead emerges through a random mirror in the store.

Mistress Moretta	Level 27 Solo Brute
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 55,000
HP 1,000; **Bloodied** 500	**Initiative** +22
AC 40, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 39	**Perception** +25
Speed 10	Darkvision
Resist 25 fire	
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2	

Traits

Howling Doom (psychic) ✦ **Aura** 1
Any enemy that ends its turn in the aura takes 20 psychic damage.

Assassin's Poise
Difficult terrain does not cost Moretta extra movement, and she can stand up as a minor action.

Implacable
At the start of each of her turns, Moretta can make a saving throw against one effect on her that a save can end.

Shadow Movement
While moving, Moretta is invisible.

Unstoppable Resolve
If Moretta is dazed, dominated, stunned, or weakened, she ignores the effects of the condition and instead grants combat advantage and cannot use her *shadow lunge* power for the condition's duration.

Standard Actions

Shadow Sword (necrotic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 6d6 + 22 damage, plus 6d6 necrotic damage if the target is granting combat advantage to Moretta.
Effect: Moretta can shift 1 square.

Rain of Blades ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Moretta uses *shadow sword* four times.

Stygian Call (cold, necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in the burst); +30 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 6d12 + 18 cold and necrotic damage, and a Stygian slayer appears in every square in the burst that contains an unbroken, framed mirror.

Triggered Actions

Shadow Initiative ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: Moretta rolls initiative.
Effect (Free Action): Moretta becomes invisible until she hits or misses with an attack, or until the end of her next turn.

Shadow Lunge ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy ends its turn within 10 squares of Moretta.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Moretta moves up to her speed, and then uses *shadow sword* on the triggering enemy.

Skills Arcana +23, Intimidate +26, Stealth +27

Str 25 (+20)	**Dex** 29 (+22)	**Wis** 25 (+20)
Con 26 (+21)	**Int** 20 (+18)	**Cha** 27 (+21)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Equipment leather armor, short sword

Mistress Moretta attacks everyone inside the building, including her own spy. Realizing his masters have turned against him, Ragatromo soon switches sides to aid the heroes.

Smashing the Mirrors

The heroes can smash the mirrors to prevent more of Moretta's slayers from appearing (AC/Reflex 5, Fortitude 10; immune to cold, necrotic, poison, psychic, all conditions, ongoing damage; hp 10).

Stygian Slayer **Level 25 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 1,750

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion **Initiative** +23
AC 39, **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 37 **Perception** +20
Speed 10 Darkvision
Resist 25 fire

Traits

Shadow Movement
While moving, the slayer is invisible.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shadow Sword** (necrotic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 15 damage, plus 10 necrotic damage if the target is granting combat advantage to the slayer.

Triggered Actions

† **Death Riposte** ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An enemy is adjacent to the slayer when the slayer drops below 1 hit point.
Effect (Free Action): The slayer uses *shadow sword* against the triggering enemy. If the attack hits, the slayer regains 1 hit point.

Str 22 (+18) **Dex** 29 (+21) **Wis** 26 (+20)
Con 18 (+16) **Int** 18 (+16) **Cha** 14 (+14)

Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal
Equipment leather armor, short sword, theater mask

Commanding the Daggers

Heroes who survive the assault are left with twenty unbound *howling daggers*. Ragatromo can explain how they're bound if he's still alive, or the heroes can uncover the command words from his journal. The bandoliers worn by Mistress Moretta and the reapers of glee allow up to three heroes to carry the daggers.

Treasure

Besides the *howling daggers*, the assassins' only items of value are their masks, which serve as gate keys between Sigil and the Hall of Tragedies. The *Moretta Mask* shares this function, but also has its own unique powers. Ensure that the characters find this item, since it's vital for performing the masquerade at the end of the adventure.

Moretta Mask Level 25 Rare

This black velvet carnival mask melts easily into the shadows, pulling you along with it.

Head Slot 625,000 gp

Property

When you roll initiative, you become invisible until you hit or miss with an attack, or until the end of your next turn.

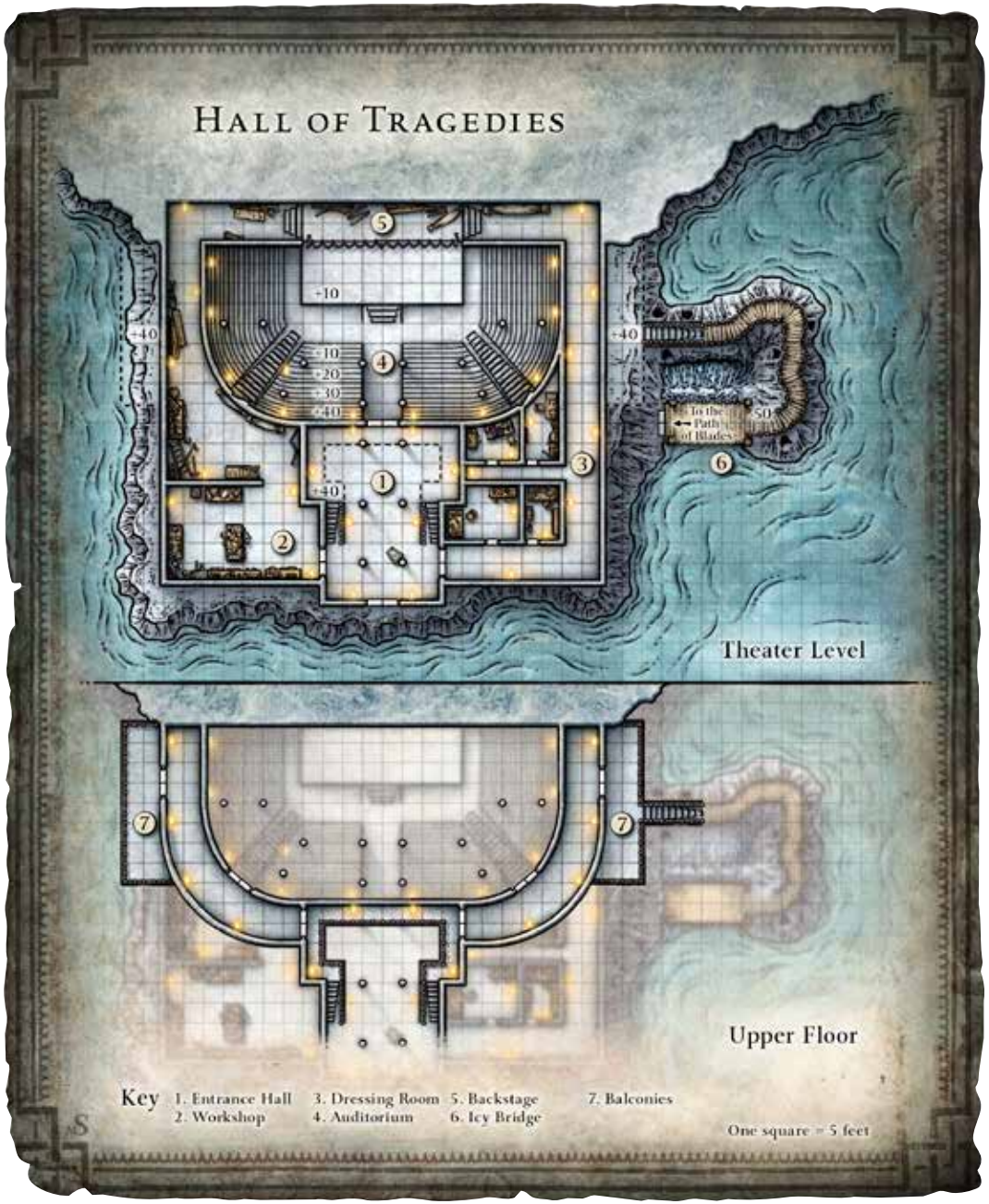
Attack Power (Illusion) ✦ **Encounter** (Immediate Reaction)
Trigger: An enemy ends its turn in a space a number of squares away from you equal to or less than your speed.
Effect: You can move up to your speed and use one of your at-will attack powers. You are invisible during the move.

Through the Looking Glass

The heroes must be carrying an assassin's mask to travel through one of the mirrors. The portal remains open for as long as one is held nearby, allowing multiple travelers to pass through using a single mask. If all the mirrors were smashed during combat, Ragatromo keeps some in other areas.

When a portal opens, read:
The mirror rimes with ice, and the candlelit foyer of an ancient theater appears through its distorted pane. Freezing fog swirls over the floor and icicles hang from the walls and ceiling. Specks of frost drift through the mirror, casting minute ripples as they cross over.

Heroes who step through the portal are transported into the Hall of Tragedies. Ragatromo won't willingly join the quest, but he could be persuaded to tell what he knows of the place.



Act II: Hall of Tragedies

The Stygian Masque uses the Hall of Tragedies, a fiendish theater, as its headquarters and training ground. The immortal denizens of Stygia steer clear of the place. The assassins afford no mercy to trespassers.

Unless described otherwise, ceilings are 15 feet high inside corridors, and 30 feet high inside rooms. Spectral candles burn eternally from the walls, casting dim light throughout the theater's interior. Although the theater is constructed from wood, the structure is hellish and immune to fire.

Haunts

The restless spirits of murdered patrons haunt the theater and its dungeons. Unable to escape from the Nine Hells, these lost souls replay their deaths in an endless cycle of torment. Roll on the following table whenever the heroes enter a new location, adding a +4 bonus if this is the first encounter of an adventuring day. If a haunt appears, its effects last until the end of the encounter, or until it is dismissed using the skill challenge. In addition to building an atmosphere of horror, most haunts impose lethal effects on heroes near the threshold of death.

Attempts to strike them down directly are doomed: existing half here and half somewhere else, the spirits simply fade from reality to avoid attacks.

2d6	Haunt
2-4	No haunt.
5	A weeping prisoner strains against his shackles. *Effect:* Bloodied creatures cannot shift.
6	A waterlogged dwarf writhes on the floor, struggling for breath. *Effect:* Bloodied characters regain only half the normal number of hit points from healing effects.
7	A mumbling halfling stumbles about in a confused circle. *Effect:* Bloodied characters cannot use daily powers.
8	A wounded knight crashes to his knees, bristling with barbed arrows. *Effect:* Bloodied characters take a -4 penalty to all defenses.
9	A tiefling child dances a merry jig, holding a bottle of green liquid. *Effect:* Bloodied characters take a -5 penalty to saving throws.
10	An emaciated man sobs in the stocks, wearing a sad-faced mask. *Effect:* At the start of each of his or her turns, a bloodied character takes 10 damage.
11	A tiefling female turns slowly to stone and then shatters into pieces. *Effect:* Bloodied characters are restrained.
12	A weeping elf female bleeds from every pore in her body. *Effect:* Bloodied characters must make a death saving throw at the end of their turn.

The heroes can attempt the following skill challenge to exorcise each haunt from the theater.

Skill Challenge: Exorcising the Haunts

A combination of holy ritual and overwhelming strength of will can dismiss the haunts.

Level: 25 (14,000 XP).

Complexity: 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Intimidate, Religion. For each of these skills, beating the DC by 10 increases the maximum successes allowed by one.

Arcana (DC 29, standard action; three successes maximum): The hero binds the magical influence of the haunt, sapping its power to influence the living.

Intimidate (DC 29, standard action; three successes maximum): The hero banishes the haunt through threats and bluster.

Religion (DC 29, standard action, three successes maximum): The haunt's ability to manifest is destroyed through a ritual of exorcism.

Secondary Skills: Bluff, Insight. These skills don't grant successes or failures, but instead grant special benefits whenever successful checks are made.

Bluff (DC 38, standard action): An offer of salvation can sometimes distract the haunt. Successful use of this skill removes any effects it imposes until the end of the character's next turn.

Insight (DC 21, standard action): A shrewd eye reads weaknesses in the haunt's behavior, granting a +2 bonus to the next primary skill check.

Success: The haunt is permanently exorcised from the theater. If it is rolled again on the haunt table, use the next available lower result, including no haunt.

Failure: The haunt becomes enraged, and all characters in the vicinity lose one healing surge from the wave of negative energy that it unleashes.

Exploring the Theater

Exploration Encounter

The main theater lies silent and abandoned. The party's initial explorations here should be used to build horror and suspense, since the adventure really begins when the characters enter the dungeon.

1. Entrance Hall

The heroes arrive at the theater's entrance hall.

When the characters arrive, read:

You stand in the forlorn wooden lobby of a once majestic theater draped in ice. Candles flicker from skulls in the walls, and freezing fog wafts over the floor. A single mirror, your portal back to Ragatromo's store, stands upright in the middle of the room.

Fixed above the double doors ahead are a pair of painted theater masks; one grinning wickedly, the other weeping. Twin staircases arc around to a gothic balcony, while open doorways on either side lead to a stage workshop and a set of dressing rooms. The theater's main entrance stands just behind you, its handles bound together with icy chains.

Aside from the haunts, the heroes uncover no dangers here until they return from the Path of Blades. The chains holding the entry doors shut can be broken with a DC 38 Athletics check.

If the characters leave the theater, read:

Frozen seas crack and groan in the darkness beneath, their vastness occasionally laid bare by distant flashes of blue fire. The theater clings to a monumental column of rock, sheer for hundreds of feet above and below. No paths lead to its doors, and no other dwellings are built nearby. Frozen wooden steps wind down to a lower level of the structure, passing by a great churning icy waterfall.

2. Workshop

Half-finished sets hang from this workshop's walls, and its shelves are laden with faded bolts of cloth and pots of frozen paint.

3. Dressing Rooms

These chambers store the assassins' surplus gear. Searching them uncovers suits of black leather harlequin garb, an arsenal of masterwork weapons, and dozens of sinister theater masks.

4. Auditorium

The Stygian Masque uses the auditorium to conduct clan meetings and perform their rituals of succession.

When the characters can see the area, read:
Wooden tableaus depicting scenes of devilish perversion ring the walls of this grand auditorium. A raised stage stands at one end, partially hidden behind dark velvet drapes. Rows of stalls rise toward the auditorium's rear, where darkened archways exit onto the theater's upper level.

Hundreds of devilish figures sit frozen within the stalls beneath layers of ice, their bodies transfixed in various expressions of shock and horror. It's as though a great spell had surprised the audience as they watched a performance, and it froze them to their seats.

This room is detailed further in Act III. It plays host to the adventure's climactic act. Right now, the devils in the ice cannot be harmed in any meaningful way.

5. Backstage

The backstage area is unlit. Painted backdrops left over from old performances lean on the walls, and gruesome props are scattered across the floor.

6. Icy Bridge

This icy bridge is the only access to the dungeon beneath the theater. The bridge and its guardians are detailed under location 1 of the Path of Blades.

7. Balconies

Due to the icy woodwork, any creature that moves along more than 3 squares of balcony in a single move must succeed on a DC 28 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Ice Caves

The caves riddling the spire's interior can be used to climb back up if a hero falls. Characters climbing through the caverns can re-emerge through any of the cave entrances shown on the map.

Navigating the caverns allows a character to climb at their normal rate, but it requires a DC 21 Dungeoneering check for each move instead of the standard Athletics check. Those who brave the slippery rock face instead find themselves at the mercy of the elements (Athletics DC 38 to climb).

Path of Blades

The assassins receive their training in the dungeons beneath the theater. To enter, the heroes must leave the theater and cross over the bridge beside the waterfall. From here on in, they walk the Path of Blades.

1. Gargoyle Guardians

Level 25 Combat Encounter (44,600 XP)

The dungeon's gargoyle guardians permit entry only to those wearing an assassin's mask.

Light: Bright (braziers)
Monsters: 2 rocktempest gargoyles
Traps/Hazards: 4 iceflame braziers

When the characters approach, read:
A wooden bridge reaches over to a door at the base of the theater. Braziers mounted at either end of the bridge flicker with cold blue flames, and swirling sleet from the nearby waterfall pelts its slippery surfaces.

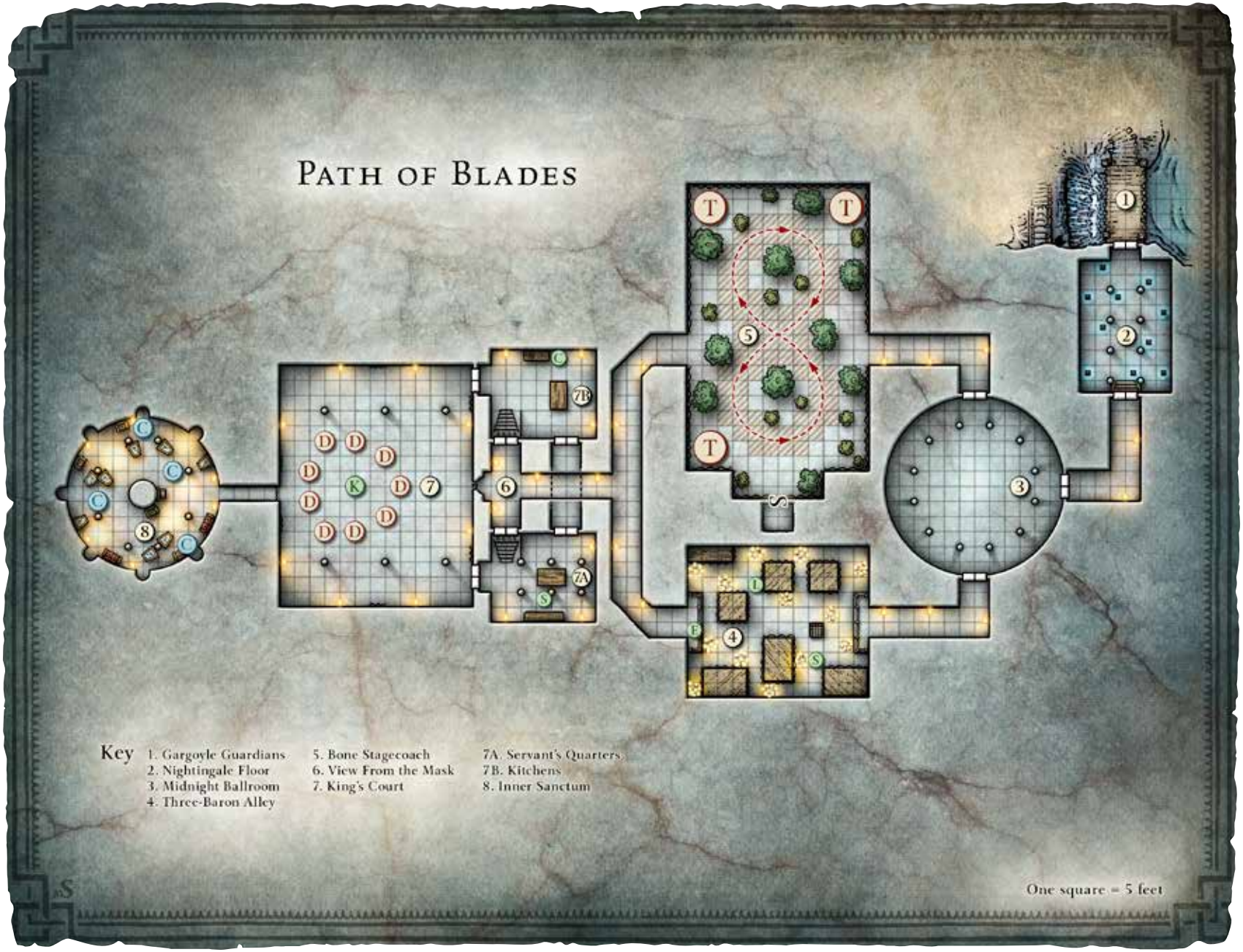
Mounted above the door is a large shield set with two giant masks: one grinning, the other weeping. A pair of faceless gargoyles perches above, their bodies covered in icicles.

The gargoyles spring to life whenever a living creature moves within 10 squares of them.

When the gargoyles animate, read:
Ice shatters as the gargoyles reach down and tear the masks from the shield. Each raises a mask to its face, and then glowers in your direction as blue flames kindle in each mask's eyes.

The gargoyles attack any creature that moves closer without first donning an assassin's mask. Only those wearing authentic masks are allowed safe

2 Rocktempest Gargoyles	**Level 23 Elite Lurker**
Large elemental humanoid (earth)	XP 10,200 each
HP 330; **Bloodied** 165	**Initiative** +23
AC 37, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 34	**Perception** +14
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)	Darkvision
Immune petrification	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claw ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +28 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage, and ongoing 15 damage (save ends).	
⸸ **Tempest Claws ✦ At-Will**	
Effect: The gargoyle uses *claw* two times. If both attacks hit the same target, the target is also dazed (save ends).	
Stone Form ✦ At-Will	
Effect: The gargoyle enters stone form until it ends the effect as a minor action. While in this form, it gains tremorsense 10 and resist 30 to all damage, gains 10 temporary hit points at the start of each of its turns, and cannot take actions except to end the effect. When the gargoyle ends the effect, it gains a +10 bonus to all damage rolls before the end of its next turn.	
⸸ **Flying Strike ✦ Recharge** when the gargoyle uses *stone form*	
Effect: The gargoyle flies up to 8 squares. At any point during its move, it makes the following attack three times, but only once against any creature. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 4d8 + 12 damage, and the gargoyle slides the target up to 3 squares.	
Str 26 (+19) **Dex** 27 (+19) **Wis** 17 (+14)	
Con 24 (+18) **Int** 15 (+13) **Cha** 21 (+16)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Primordial	


Path of Blades
Key
1. Gargoyle Guardians
2. Nightingale Floor
3. Midnight Ballroom
4. Three-Baron Alley
5. Bone Stagecoach
6. View From the Mask
7. King's Court
7A. Servant's Quarters
7B. Kitchens
8. Inner Sanctum
One square = 5 feet

passage. The gargoyles automatically detect counterfeits and illusions.

When they attack, the gargoyles target all living creatures in sight, including those wearing assassin's masks. Triggering the gargoyles also activates the iceflame braziers, which begin spitting globs of cold at all living creatures in range.

4 Iceflame Braziers	**Level 24 Trap**
Object	XP 6,050 each
Detect automatic	**Initiative** +15
HP 100	
AC 31, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 3, **Will** –	
Immune cold, necrotic, poison, psychic, radiant, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
Attack (cold, force) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +27 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 6d6 + 11 cold and force damage, and the target falls prone.	

Tactics

The gargoyles use *flying strike* whenever possible to force their opponents off the bridge. If an enemy survives the fall, the gargoyle swoops down after it and targets it in isolation. The gargoyles ignore any creature that moves through the doors into location 2.

Icy Terrain

The bridge is just as slippery as the balcony. Falling characters land on the rocks 200 feet below and must climb up through the ice caves. Any creature forced into the churning waterfall takes 4d10 + 19 damage and immediately falls to the base of the cliff.

2. Nightingale Floor

Level 28 Combat Encounter (65,000 XP)

This trapped hallway tests the initiates' prowess at moving silently, unleashing deadly living spells to destroy those who perform badly.

Light: Dim (flickering lanterns)

Monsters: 20 shards of Uralinda

When the characters can see the area, read:

Grotesque carvings cover the wood-paneled walls of this pillared hall, and a layer of thick fog hangs over its floor. Shuttered silver lanterns hang from chains in the ceiling, flickering with incandescent blue light. Wooden steps ascend to a set of studded double doors at the far end of the hall.

Perception DC 21: The character sees that the door handles opposite are carved to look like grinning faces, with hands cupped to their ears.

Perception DC 29: The character notices a line of tiny eyes hidden among the carvings, ringing the hall at a height of roughly 7 feet.

The hallway is trapped throughout. First, the floorboards are loosely fitted to creak whenever pressure is applied (Perception DC 37 to detect if searching before stepping on the floor). Creatures traversing the floor must succeed on a DC 29 Stealth check or be heard by the enchanted door handles. Failure is automatic if the player hasn't specified the character is moving stealthily.

Second, the eyes in the walls spot any visible creature that moves above floor level. If a Perception check is required, the eyes have a +18 check modifier.

Shards of Uralinda

The deadly shards of Uralinda are contained inside the lanterns, and they are unleashed into the hall if intruders are detected inside. Once released, the doors at either end of the hall slam shut and lock (three successful DC 38 Thievery checks are required to unlock each).

Ten shards are released into the hall when the trap is first sprung, with each shard appearing in an empty space within 2 squares of a lantern. On each round thereafter, 1d6 additional shards are released from the lanterns on the shards' turn, up to a maximum of twenty shards. The shards do not follow the characters out of this room.

20 Shards of Uralinda	**Level 28 Minion Soldier**
Medium fey animate (cold, construct)	XP 3,250 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +22	
AC 44, **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 40	**Perception** +18
Speed 6	
Resist 15 cold	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ **Seething Cold** (cold, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 18 cold and psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the shard's next turn.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Unfettered Apocalypse ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: An enemy scores a critical hit against the shard or drops the shard to 0 hit points.	
Effect (No Action): The shard creates a duplicate of itself, which appears in the nearest unoccupied square. Any effects on the shard do not transfer to the duplicate. The duplicate cannot use this power. At the end of the shard's next turn, the duplicate disappears.	
Str 16 (+17)	**Dex** 22 (+20) **Wis** 18 (+18)
Con 27 (+22)	**Int** 13 (+15) **Cha** 30 (+24)
Alignment unaligned	**Languages** Elven

Treasure

The ten platinum lanterns are ornamented with filigrees of screaming faces and exude a chill aura when lit. Carefully disabled, each lantern could be sold to a collector for 100 pp. Together, they account for treasure parcel 9.

3. Midnight Ballroom

Level 28 Combat Encounter (74,400 XP)

This frozen ballroom might seem safe at first, but it soon becomes the setting for a harrowing fight against the assassins.

Light: Bright (spectral light shaft)

Monsters: Lady Arlecchina (who has 15 *howling daggers* and a *howling bandolier*, as well as the *Arlecchina Mask*), 8 devil dancers

When characters first see the area, read:

This empty ballroom has a domed ceiling painted with a haunting impression of the night sky. A full moon near the top of the dome casts a beam of spectral moonlight upon the floor. Two magnificent wooden double doors stand to either side of the floor, the western one carved with an elaborate relief of city streets, and the eastern one depicting a winding woodland path. Everything is cold and silent.

The heroes run into trouble when they leave this area and then return.

When characters return, read:

A female fiend wearing a white silk ball gown and matching eye-mask is poised beneath the moonbeam, her blue arms stretched toward the ceiling. More than a dozen howling daggers hang in the air around her. Eight faceless figures are posed around her, each painted blood red from head to toe and standing utterly motionless.

Lady Arlecchina **Level 28 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 26,000

HP 506; **Bloodied** 253 **Initiative** +27
AC 40, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 39 **Perception** +21
Speed 10 Darkvision
Resist 25 fire
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

☼ **Mesmerizing Grace** (psychic) ✦ **Aura** 2
This aura is active only while Arlecchina is adjacent to an ally. Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura cannot attack Arlecchina until the start of its next turn. If Arlecchina takes damage, each enemy in the aura takes 15 psychic damage.

Assassin's Poise
Difficult terrain does not cost Arlecchina extra movement, and she can stand up as a minor action.

Dance Partner
Arlecchina has a +4 power bonus to all defenses while adjacent to an ally.

Implacable
At the start of each of her turns, Arlecchina can make a saving throw against one effect on her that a save can end.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +33 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 25 damage.
Effect: Arlecchina can shift 1 square.

† **Kiss of Death** (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** when Arlecchina bloodies an enemy
Attack: Melee 1 (one bloodied creature); +31 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 10d10 + 30 necrotic damage. If target is reduced to 30 hit points or fewer, the target drops to 0 hit points.
Miss: Half damage.

Frenzied Hunger ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Arlecchina uses *bite* three times. If she has no allies left in the encounter, she instead uses *bite* four times.

Join the Dance (psychic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚅
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +31 vs. Will
Hit: 3d8 + 24 psychic damage, and Arlecchina slides the target up to 5 squares. If the target ends this move adjacent to Arlecchina or one of her allies, the target is dominated until the end of its next turn.

Move Actions

Dance of the Damned ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Arlecchina shifts up to her speed, but must end the move adjacent to an ally or a creature dominated by her.

Skills Acrobatics +30, Stealth +30
Str 24 (+21) **Dex** 32 (+25) **Wis** 24 (+21)
Con 21 (+19) **Int** 17 (+17) **Cha** 30 (+24)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Equipment gown

Lady Arlecchina and her troupe of devil dancers wait for the heroes to enter the ballroom, and then leap forward to attack. Maddening music fills the air as the dancers whirl into the fray.

Devil Dancer **Level 24 Brute**
Medium immortal animate XP 6,050

HP 275; **Bloodied** 137 **Initiative** +22
AC 36, **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 36 **Perception** +20
Speed 8 Darkvision
Resist 25 fire

Traits

Lead the Dance
Whenever the dancer moves, any creature grabbed by the dancer moves with it, staying adjacent to the dancer in a square of the dancer's choice.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Claw** (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** when the dancer has no creature grabbed
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +29 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8 + 22 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 28). The target takes ongoing 30 necrotic damage until the grab ends.

Minor Actions

Switch Partners ✦ **Recharge** when the dancer starts its turn grabbing a creature
Effect: The creature grabbed by the dancer is released, and is instead grabbed by another dancer adjacent to the creature.

Str 21 (+17) **Dex** 30 (+22) **Wis** 26 (+20)
Con 25 (+19) **Int** 2 (+8) **Cha** 4 (+9)
Alignment evil **Languages** –

Treasure

Lady Arlecchina carries fifteen *howling daggers*, and her mask is imbued with powerful magical properties. The mask is vital for completing the masquerade at the end of the adventure, and it comprises treasure parcel 3.

Arlecchina Mask	Level 27 Rare
One kiss from whoever wears this mask can stop the heart.	
Head Slot	1,625,000 gp
Property	
You gain a +6 item bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks.	
Attack Power (Necrotic) ✦ **Daily** (Standard Action)	
Attack: Melee 1 (one bloodied creature); your level + 3 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 10d10 + your Charisma modifier + 6 necrotic damage. If target is reduced to 30 hit points or fewer, the target drops to 0 hit points.	
Miss: Half damage.	

4. Three-Baron Alley

Level 28 Combat Encounter (74,500 XP)

Stealthily disabling a trio of training dummies is the only way to acquire the mask locked in this hall. Assassins soon arrive to complicate the task.

Light: Dim (candles)

Monsters: Lord Bauta (who has 15 *howling daggers* and a *howling bandolier*, as well as the *Bauta Mask*), 4 reapers of despair, 10 stygian slayers

Traps/Hazards: 3 training mannequins

When characters can see the area, read:

The corridor opens onto a balcony overlooking a candlelit hall. Canvases painted like weathered building façades are arranged throughout, draped over high wooden scaffolds. An archway exits on the far side.

Three human-sized mannequins are stationed across the hall, each wearing a tunic emblazoned with a unique coat of arms: a lion, a spider, and an eagle. The two closest stand at street level, while the third stands on a balcony at the far end, just above the archway. All three hold lanterns flickering with blue flame, and they are shielding their eyes as though on lookout. A painted theater mask sits in a cage between them.

Perception DC 21: The character spots scrolls tucked into the mannequins' belts (these are noticed automatically within 3 squares of a mannequin).

Disabling the Mannequins

Each mannequin's lantern spit bolts of necrotic energy at intruders detected inside the hall. Dropping a mannequin to 0 hit points extinguishes its lantern, but each must be disabled in the correct order or its lantern explodes.

The clues to the proper sequence are written on the scrolls tucked into the mannequins' belts. Together, these read:

3 Training Mannequins	Level 25 Trap
Object	XP 7,000 each
Detect automatic	**Initiative** –
HP 25	**Perception** +19
AC 35, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 5, **Will** –	
Immune cold, necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage	
Triggered Actions	
Attack (cold, necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: A creature ends its turn within 5 squares of the mannequin, and the mannequin perceives the creature's location.	
Attack (Opportunity Action): Ranged 5 (the triggering creature); +28 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 4d10 + 11 cold and necrotic damage.	
Exploding Lantern (cold, necrotic) ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: A lantern is destroyed without first disabling the mannequin that is enchanted to watch over it.	
Attack (Free Action): Close burst 10 (creatures in the burst); +28 versus Reflex	
Hit: 4d10 + 11 cold and necrotic damage, and the target cannot become invisible or benefit from concealment, and it takes a -10 penalty to Stealth checks (save ends all).	
Miss: Half damage.	

Spider Scroll: "While the Eagle lives, the Lion has my protection."

Lion Scroll: "If the Spider dies, I defend the Eagle."

Eagle Scroll: "While the Lion lives, I watch over the Spider."

The correct order to disable the mannequins is Eagle, Lion, and Spider. A mannequin's lantern does not explode if it has been disabled in the correct order.

Arrival of the Stygian Masque

Well aware of the heroes' presence, the fiendish Lord Bauta intercepts them as they cross the midway point of the hall.

Lord Bauta **Level 27 Elite Brute**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 22,000

HP 616; **Bloodied** 308 **Initiative** +22
AC 40, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 39 **Perception** +22
Speed 10 Darkvision
Resist 25 fire
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Assassin's Poise
Difficult terrain does not cost Bauta extra movement, and he can stand up as a minor action.

Implacable
At the start of each of his turns, Bauta can make a saving throw against one effect on him that a save can end.

Scent of Blood
Bloodied enemies grant combat advantage to Bauta for his melee attacks.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shadow Axe** (necrotic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 6d6 + 22 damage. If the target is granting combat advantage to Bauta, it takes an additional 6d6 necrotic damage and falls prone.

⸸ **Double Attack** ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: Bauta uses *shadow axe* twice.

✣ **Shadow Net** (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +30 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is restrained, weakened, and takes ongoing 25 necrotic damage (save ends all).

Minor Actions

Shadow Cloak (illusion) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Bauta is invisible until he hits or misses with an attack, or until the start of his next turn.

Triggered Actions

Blood Charge ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: A bloodied enemy ends its turn within 10 squares of but more than 2 squares away from Bauta.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Bauta moves up to his speed to a space adjacent to the triggering enemy, and then uses *shadow axe* against the triggering enemy.

Skills Intimidate +23, Stealth +27
Str 30 (+23) **Dex** 28 (+22) **Wis** 28 (+22)
Con 28 (+22) **Int** 17 (+16) **Cha** 20 (+18)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Equipment leather armor, battleaxe

10 Stygian Slayers **Level 25 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 1,750 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +23
AC 39, **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 37 **Perception** +20
Speed 10 Darkvision
Resist 25 fire

Traits

Shadow Movement
While moving, the slayer is invisible.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shadow Sword** (necrotic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC
Hit: 15 damage, plus 10 necrotic damage if the target is granting combat advantage to the slayer.

Triggered Actions

⸸ **Death Riposte** ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An enemy is adjacent to the slayer when the slayer drops below 1 hit point.
Effect (Free Action): The slayer uses *shadow sword* against the triggering enemy. If the attack hits, the slayer regains 1 hit point.

Str 22 (+18) **Dex** 29 (+21) **Wis** 26 (+20)
Con 18 (+16) **Int** 18 (+16) **Cha** 14 (+14)
Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal
Equipment leather armor, short sword, theater mask

When Lord Bauta arrives, read:
Masked assassins stride into the hall. At their head is a tall blue figure dressed in black finery, a sable cloak pinned across his shoulder and a blood-red carnival mask worn over his face. As he surveys the hall, he draws a battleaxe, and his chest rises as though he can barely contain his fury.

Bauta and his allies attack.

Features of the Area

The following features are present within the hall:

Adamantine Cage: The cage is locked (Thievery DC 38 to pick the lock), and sits in full view of the mannequins. It unlocks and opens when all three mannequins are destroyed. A mask is held within—see "Treasure."

Balcony: The balconies at each end of the hall are 20 feet above floor level.

Candles: Squares containing candles are dimly lit. If the candles are extinguished, that square and any adjacent squares become dark.

Scaffolds: The mock buildings stand 20 feet high (Athletics DC 10 to climb).

Treasure

The mask from the cage is worn full-face and is painted to look like a squire or page. It radiates faint magic when studied but has no obvious powers or properties. This item is the squire's mask, and its purpose becomes clear only when the heroes enter the "King's Court" in location 7.

The assassins carry *howling daggers* and the *Bauta Mask*. This mask is vital for conducting the masquerade at the end of the adventure, and it accounts for treasure parcel 4.

4 Reapers of Despair	Level 25 Brute
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 7,000 each
HP 280; **Bloodied** 140	**Initiative** +19
AC 37, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 36	**Perception** +18
Speed 10	Darkvision
Resist 25 fire	
Traits	
☼ **Misery's Company** (psychic) ✦ **Aura** 2	
An enemy that starts its turn in the aura must end its turn in the aura or take 15 psychic damage.	
Standard Actions	
⨁ **Pain Flail** (psychic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +30 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 21 damage (5d10 + 31 damage if the reaper scores a critical hit), and ongoing 15 psychic damage (save ends).	
Minor Actions	
Cloak of Despair (illusion) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Effect: The reaper is invisible to anyone taking ongoing psychic damage until the reaper hits or misses with an attack, or until the end of the reaper's next turn.	
Skills Stealth +24	
Str 28 (+21) **Dex** 25 (+19) **Wis** 23 (+18)	
Con 20 (+17) **Int** 17 (+15) **Cha** 18 (+16)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal	
Equipment leather armor, flail	

Bauta Mask Level 26 Rare

This crimson facemask fills your mind with simmering bloodlust.

Head Slot 1,125,000 gp

Property

Bloodied enemies grant combat advantage to you for your melee attacks.

Attack Power ✦ Encounter (Immediate Reaction)

Trigger: A bloodied enemy ends its turn within 10 squares of you but more than 2 squares away from you.

Effect: You can move up to your speed to a space adjacent to the triggering enemy, and then use one of your at-will melee attack powers against the triggering enemy.

5. Bone Stagecoach

Level 27 Combat Encounter (55,000+ XP)

Would-be assassins must hijack a haunted stagecoach to prove themselves to their devilish masters.

Light: Dim (tree candles)

Monsters: 3 Stygian treants, 4+ corrupted lunatics (created by stagecoach)

When the characters arrive here, read:

Plaster trees and cutaway bushes decorate this strange hall. Freezing fog drifts between the densely packed props, and candles hang like fruit from the tree branches. Woodland backdrops dress the walls, and the archway opposite is painted to look like bending trees.

3 Stygian Treants	Level 25 Elite Soldier
Huge fey magical beast (plant)	XP 14,000 each
HP 470; **Bloodied** 235	**Initiative** +20
AC 41, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 36	**Perception** +16
Speed 6 (ice walk)	Low-light vision
Resist 15 cold, 5 fire	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
Balefrost Aura (cold, necrotic) ✦ **Aura** 2	
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 15 cold and necrotic damage, and the enemy is slowed until the start of its next turn.	
Standard Actions	
⨁ **Slam** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +30 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 22 damage.	
✧ **Stygian Roots** (cold, necrotic) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in the burst); +28 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 4d8 + 20 cold and necrotic damage, and the target is restrained (save ends). While any target is restrained by this effect, the treant is immobilized.	
Aftereffect: The target is immobilized (save ends).	
Str 30 (+22) **Dex** 23 (+18) **Wis** 18 (+16)	
Con 27 (+20) **Int** 16 (+15) **Cha** 28 (+21)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal	

An unlit lantern hangs from a post near the middle of the hall, next to a brazier of low-burning blue flames. A lamp-lighting taper is strung just beneath the lantern.

Perception DC 38: Three of the trees are actually living oaks draped in icicles, with gnarled faces leering from their trunks. The creatures appear to be sleeping.

Lighting the lantern summons the stagecoach, which emerges from a secret room behind one of the canvas backdrops. Characters can discover this cavity beforehand (Perception DC 40 while searching), but they awaken the stagecoach if they make any attempt to part the backdrop.

When the stagecoach emerges, read:

A team of skeletal horses bursts through one of the painted backdrops, pulling a sinister stagecoach of oak and ivory. Effigies of screaming madmen are carved into its panels, and cackling skull lanterns hang from its roof. A wooden mannequin dressed like a noblewoman rattles about inside, clutching a metal strongbox.

Corrupted Lunatic	Level 28 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 3,250
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +21	
AC 40, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 39	**Perception** +17
Speed 6	
Standard Actions	
⨁ **Touch of Wrath** (charm) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +31 vs. Will	
Hit: 10 damage, and as a free action, the target makes a basic attack against its nearest ally.	
Triggered Actions	
Retributive Strike ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An enemy misses the lunatic with an attack.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The lunatic uses *touch of wrath*.	
Spread of Wrath ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: An enemy reduces the lunatic to 0 hit points.	
Effect (Free Action): The lunatic uses *touch of wrath*.	
Str 30 (+24) **Dex** 25 (+21) **Wis** 17 (+17)	
Con 20 (+19) **Int** 15 (+16) **Cha** 26 (+22)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common	

The stagecoach circles the hall in a great figure eight, trampling anyone in its path. As it charges around, the lunatics bound into its carvings come to life and are released to slay the challengers. The coach's thundering arrival also awakens the treants, which attack any strangers present inside the hall. If the heroes flee, the coach returns to its hiding place, the treants return to sleep, and the summoning lantern is extinguished.

Bone Stagecoach

At the start of each round, the stagecoach moves 10 squares along the route shown on the map. (Speed 10 is about half of one loop of the figure eight.) Any creature in the coach's path takes an attack +28 vs. Reflex, and on a hit is struck by the coach. At the end of each move, four wooden lunatics peel free from the coach and rush to attack the heroes. Heroes can jump onboard the coach while it's moving by succeeding on a DC 29 Acrobatics or Athletics check, with failure by 5 or more resulting in being stuck by the coach. Any creature struck by the coach is knocked prone and takes 8d12 + 20 damage.

The mannequin sitting inside the coach holds its strongbox in a rigid grasp, and the mannequin lets go only if it takes a "killing blow" dealing at least 25 damage. The strongbox is locked (Thievery DC 39 to pick), but it can be opened using the key hidden in the mannequin's dress (Perception DC 29 to spot). After the strongbox is opened, the bone stagecoach stops releasing lunatics and returns to its hiding place.

Treasure

A facemask depicting a rosy-cheeked woman is held inside the mannequin's box. Like the mask in location 4, it radiates faint magic but has no obvious powers or properties. This is the cook's mask, and it can be used in the "King's Court" in location 7.

6. View from the Mask

Exploration Encounter

The mask in the wall here allows aspirants to survey their most important test of all: the King's Court in location 7.

When the characters arrive, read:
The passageway forks into a T-junction up ahead. A metal mask is hollowed into the facing wall, its eye-slits overlooking a darkened space beyond.

The passageways to either side both end in stout wooden doors. Signboards mounted above read "Kitchens" to the left, and "Servants" to the right.

A character can look through the mask only by pressing his or her face fully inside.

When a character looks through the mask, read:
In this ornate throne room, a painted wooden king is enthroned in the middle of the floor, one hand resting on a metal strongbox, and the other grasping a wooden goblet. Eight wooden demons encircle him, and tapestries of horn blowers hang from the walls. An iron gate behind the king barricades a darkened archway leading onward.

A boy-sized wooden mannequin creaks into view from somewhere below, carrying a bottle of wine on a tray. It walks stiffly over to the king, and then tips the bottle into his goblet. The king mechanically raises the goblet to his lips, and the boy retreats back the way it came. As it turns, you see that its face is painted like a young squire or page.

This scene repeats every five minutes. Heroes who've acquired the squire's mask from location 4 immediately recognize it as the face painted on the mannequin.

7. King's Court

Level 29 Combat Encounter (77,000 XP)

Poisoning the king is the surest way to escape these chambers alive. Those who fail must prove their worth through combat, or die trying.

Light: Bright in the throne room (fiery archway), dim in the side chambers (candles)
Monsters: 9 enraged hezrous
Traps: Cacophonous tapestries

This location encompasses three separate areas: the servants' quarters (location 7a), the kitchens (location 7b), and the throne room. The throne room appears as described in area 6.

When the characters enter 7a, read:
A flight of steps descends into an oak-paneled chamber lined with wooden pillars. An empty table stands in the middle of the floor, and a large wardrobe leans against one wall. Studded wooden doors exit to the north and east.

When the characters enter area 7b, read:
A wooden staircase descends into a candlelit chamber. Backdrops pinned to the walls give the impression of a castle kitchen, replete with painted shelves of ingredients, sacks of potatoes, and barrels of beer. A real shelf protrudes from the eastern wall, bearing a glass bottle marked with a skull and crossbones. Studded wooden doors exit to the north and west.

Mannequins

Three enchanted mannequins operate inside these rooms: the cook, the squire, and the king. Like those in location 4, each is designed to detect intruders and has +19 Perception for that purpose, but they ignore anyone wearing either the cook's mask or the squire's mask. Unlike the other mannequins, these are enchanted to move around the court and perform tasks. All three mannequins deactivate if an intruder

9 Enraged Hezrous	Level 24 Brute
Large elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 6,050 each
HP 278; **Bloodied** 139	**Initiative** +19
AC 36, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 35	**Perception** +19
Speed 6	Darkvision
Traits	
☼ **Noxious Stench** (poison) ✦ **Aura** 2	
Any enemy that uses an attack power while in the aura takes 10 poison damage, or 20 poison damage while the hezrou is bloodied.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Slam** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +29 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d10 + 13 damage.	
⸸ **Bite** ✦ **Recharge** ⚃ ⚄ ⚅	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +29 vs. AC	
Hit: 6d12 + 16 damage.	
Triggered Actions	
Variable Resistance ✦ **2/Encounter**	
Trigger: The hezrou takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.	
Effect (Free Action): The hezrou gains resist 20 to the triggering damage type until the end of the cnounter or until it uses variable resistance again.	
Str 30 (+22) **Dex** 25 (+19) **Wis** 25 (+19)	
Con 28 (+21) **Int** 8 (+11) **Cha** 18 (+16)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal	

is detected—see the "Intruder Alert" section below in that case.

Cook: The cook picks up the empty wine bottle from the kitchen table and carries it to the servants' quarters. When it arrives, it places the bottle on the table and returns to the kitchens.

Squire: The squire waits in the servants' quarters until the wine bottle is delivered, and then carries it to the king. After this, it carries the bottle into the kitchens and places it on the kitchen table.

King: The king drinks from his goblet when the wine bottle is tilted over it. If the poison from the kitchen is detected inside, the king releases the strongbox and collapses in a heap. If anyone, even someone wearing a mask the king usually ignores, tampers with his strongbox or tries to open the gate behind him, the king sets off the intruder alert.

Intruder Alert

If intruders are detected in the area, the demons turn to flesh. The portcullises (see "Features of the Area") then slam shut over the doors to area 6, and the cacophonous tapestries activate.

Cacophonous Tapestries	Level 25 Elite Trap
Object	XP 14,000
Detect automatic	**Initiative** –
HP 30 per 5-foot section (six sections)	
AC 37, **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 5, **Will** –	
Immune cold, necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage	
Triggered Actions	
Attack (thunder) ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An enemy ends its turn within 10 squares of any active trap section.	
Attack (Opportunity Action): +28 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 30 thunder damage.	
Miss: 15 thunder damage.	
Countermeasures	
Destroy: When a 5-foot section is destroyed, it ceases to be active. Each 5-foot section that is destroyed reduces the damage the trap deals by 5.	

Features of the Area

Northern Gate: The key from the king's strongbox can be used to unlock the northern gate. A successful DC 40 Thievery check also opens the lock.

Poison Bottle: The poison bottle in the kitchens contains green dye. A successful DC 21 Arcana check to detect magic discerns that the dye is an admixture used as a magical trigger.

Portcullises: Raised portcullises are set above both entrances from area 6 (Perception DC 22 to notice when passing underneath). They are rigged to fall if intruders are detected inside the court. After they fall, they can be raised again by with a successful DC 38 Athletics check. They also rise again if the strongbox is open and all monsters in the court are slain.

Wardrobe: The wardrobe in the servants' quarters can hide up to three Medium creatures. Holes in the woodwork allow those inside to monitor their surroundings without being seen.

Treasure

The king's strongbox is locked (Thievery DC 39 to pick), but can be opened using the key on the king's belt (Perception DC 21 to spot, found on any search). The key to area 8 is inside the strongbox, alongside 2,500 pp (treasure parcel 7).

Conclusion

Award XP for the encounter if the characters poison the king without setting off the intruder alert.

8. Inner Sanctum

Level 27 Combat Encounter (55,000 XP)

The heroes finally gain access to the clan's inner sanctum, where they face yet another of the dark masters.

Light: Dim (candles)

Monsters: Count Pestarzt (who has 15 *howling daggers* and a *howling bandolier,* as well as the *Pestarzt Mask*)

When the characters enter this room, read:

This sumptuous lounge is furnished with ornate divans, silken drapes, and freestanding mirrors. Darkened niches are spaced around the walls, and monstrous carvings leer down from the ceiling.

A wheel of black wood is fixed to a pillar in the middle of the room, its surface carved with a hundred dagger-shaped recesses. Fifteen glittering daggers are set across the wheel, lashed in place by leather straps. A large tome sits just beneath, spread out over an iron bookstand.

Count Pestarzt **Level 27 Solo Controller**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 55,000

HP 996; **Bloodied** 498 **Initiative** +20
AC 41, **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 39 **Perception** +25
Speed 10 Darkvision
Immune *corrupting fumes*; **Resist** 25 fire, 15 poison
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

Assassin's Poise
Difficult terrain does not cost Pestarzt extra movement, and he can stand up as a minor action.

Implacable
At the start of each of his turns, Pestarzt can make a saving throw against one effect on him that a save can end.

Unstoppable Resolve
If Pestarzt is dazed, dominated, stunned, or weakened, he ignores the effects of the condition and instead grants combat advantage and cannot use his *ghost in the murk* power for the condition's duration.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shadow Cane** (necrotic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +32 vs. AC
Hit: 6d8 + 18 damage, and Pestarzt slides the target up to 3 squares. If the target is granting combat advantage to Pestarzt, the target takes an additional 4d8 necrotic damage.

✲ **Corrupting Fumes** (necrotic, poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (creatures in the burst); +30 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d8 + 21 necrotic and poison damage, and the target cannot spend healing surges or regain hit points (save ends). A creature cannot make the saving throw against this effect on the same turn the creature attacks Pestarzt.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of Pestarzt's next turn. Any creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 25 necrotic and poison damage. The zone is heavily obscured for creatures besides Pestarzt.

Miasmic Assault ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Effect: Pestarzt uses *corrupting fumes* twice.

Move Actions

Murkwalker (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Pestarzt teleports 10 squares to a square inside a *corrupting fumes* zone.

Triggered Actions

Ghost in the Murk (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy within 10 squares of Pestarzt starts its turn inside a *corrupting fumes* zone.
Effect (Free Action): Pestarzt teleports to a square adjacent to the triggering enemy and uses *shadow cane* against that enemy.

Skills Arcana +26, Stealth +25
Str 20 (+18) **Dex** 25 (+20) **Wis** 24 (+20)
Con 25 (+20) **Int** 27 (+21) **Cha** 20 (+18)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Equipment leather armor, cane

Count Pestarzt lurks inside one of the niches, creeping forward to attack after at least half the party is inside the room.

When Count Pestarzt attacks, read:
Shadows lengthen as a robed figure appears in one of the niches, its face is hidden behind a long beaklike mask. Coils of black smoke trail behind it as it slinks closer.

Count Pestarzt attacks and fights to the death.

Features of the Area

Wheel of Daggers: A standard action is required to unchain all the daggers from the wheel. Once released, the daggers fly wild in their space until bound.

Magic Mirrors: As a minor action, a creature wearing an assassin's mask can teleport from a space adjacent to one mirror to a space adjacent to another mirror in sight.

The Crimson Dance

The book on the stand is written in angel's blood and bound in demon skin. The Crimson Dance details the history of the assassins and holds the secret to overcoming them.

If characters examine the tome, read:
The book details the history of the Stygian Masque, from their relationships with the Nine Lords of Hell through to their activities in the present day.

Their ceremonies are of particular note. Five masters have always led the clan, each wearing a different mask of office. Whoever wears the Volto Mask commands them all, and can be overthrown only if the four others unite to perform a theatrical ritual.

The steps of this masquerade are carefully detailed within the book. Firstly, Moretta should enter the auditorium from stage left, crying out "Why do we four meet again?" In response, Bauta enters from stage right with the words "A pact in blood." Arlecchina dances down the aisle, singing "A trust betrayed," and then Pestarzt emerges from behind the curtain to proclaim "The master falls beneath our blades." This summons Volto from anywhere in the cosmos, and the masters can join forces to murder Volto on the stage.

Treasure

Numerous valuables are scattered around the inner sanctum, such as a jeweled walking cane that makes no sound when rapped on the floor (200 pp), a platinum zoetrope that displays a different horrific scene every time it's spun (400 pp), an artistically imagined (rather than accurate) map of Stygia (900 pp), a carnivorous plant that can be milked daily to produce 1d4 doses of *dark toxin (DMG)*, and a skull chalice.

Searching the central pillar uncovers an ancient scroll hidden inside a secret compartment: a coded record of every contract ever accepted by the assassins. Studying this scroll with an Object Reading ritual should uncover the identity of the assassins' most recent clients, including their current deal with Torog.

Also of great value is the mask worn by Count Pestarzt: a vital component in the ritual to summon Contessa Volto. Together, these valuables account for treasure parcels 2 and 6.

Pestarzt Mask Level 28 Rare

This strange leather mask protects you from the hellish fumes of the underworld.

Head Slot 2,125,000 gp

Property

You have resist 15 poison, and you are immune to all effects of this item's attack power.

Attack Power (Necrotic, Poison, Zone) ✦ **Daily** (Standard Action)

Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (creatures in the burst); your level + 3 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 10d6 necrotic and poison damage, and the target cannot regain hit points (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. Any creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 15 necrotic and poison damage. The zone is heavily obscured for creatures besides you.

Sustain Standard: The zone persists until the end of your next turn.

Utility Power (Teleportation) ✦ **Daily** (Move Action)

Effect: You teleport 10 squares to a square inside the zone created by this item's attack power.

Act III: The Masquerade

Armed with the means to summon Volto, the characters return to the theater auditorium to perform the masquerade.

Final Performance

Level 30 Combat Encounter (95,000 XP)

The heroes stage a dramatic ritual to summon Contessa Volto, and then battle her for control of the remaining *howling daggers*.

Light: Dim (candles)

Monsters: Contessa Volto (who has 20 *howling daggers* and a *howling bandolier*, as well as the *Volto Mask*), 30+ legion devil legionnaires

Describe the auditorium again:

Wooden tableaus depicting scenes of perversion ring the walls of this grand auditorium. A raised stage stands at one end, partially hidden behind dark velvet drapes. Rows of stalls rise toward the auditorium's rear, where darkened archways exit onto the theater's upper level.

Hundreds of devilish figures sit frozen within the stalls beneath layers of ice, their bodies transfixed in various expressions of shock and horror. It's as though a great spell had surprised the audience as they watched a performance,

The ceiling of the auditorium is 60 feet above the lowest level of the stalls. Due to the presence of the frozen devils, all squares within the stalls are difficult terrain. The Stygian ice encasing the devils can't be chipped away. Each square within the stalls contains one or more frozen devils.

Performing the Masquerade

The masquerade must be performed in the theater's auditorium. For the ritual to succeed, each performer must enter the stage from a different position and speak a line from the script while wearing the correct mask. Heroes can swap masks to take on multiple roles, but their actions must be performed in the correct order or the ritual fails.

The masquerade is described in the book from area 8. The performer wearing the *Moretta Mask* must enter first from stage left, followed by Bauta from stage right, Arlecchina from the aisle, and finally Pestarzt from behind the stage curtain. Due to the timing described in the ritual, only one performer may emerge each round.

When the first line is performed, read:

Your words reverberate as though echoing between worlds. Candles flare throughout the theater, chandelier candles light with explosions of green flame, and horrifying music fills the air. Shrieking with rage, the devils in the audience start to smash through the ice and claw their way toward you.

The frozen devils are enchanted to break free from the ice whenever interlopers perform the masquerade. Roll initiative for the devils as soon as the masquerade begins. On each of their turns until the ritual ends, two devils emerge from the stalls for

Contessa Volto **Level 30 Solo Brute (Leader)**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 95,000

HP 1,096; **Bloodied** 548 **Initiative** +26
AC 42, **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 42 **Perception** +27
Speed 10 Darkvision
Resist 25 fire
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 3

Traits

Gathering Shroud (necrotic) ✦ **Aura** 3
Allies in the aura have partial concealment.

Assassin's Poise
Difficult terrain does not cost Volto extra movement, and she can stand up as a minor action.

Implacable
At the start of each of her turns, Volto can make a saving throw against one effect on her that a save can end.

Shadow Movement
While moving, Volto is invisible.

Unstoppable Resolve
If Volto is dazed, dominated, stunned, or weakened, she ignores the effects of the condition and instead grants combat advantage and cannot use her *darting shadows* power for the condition's duration.

Standard Actions

Shadow Sword (necrotic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 6d6 + 26 damage, plus 6d6 necrotic damage if the target is granting combat advantage to Volto.
Effect: Volto can shift 1 square.

Balefire Dart (fire, necrotic, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +35 vs. AC
Hit: 6d6 + 25 fire and necrotic damage, and Volto can knock the target prone or slide it up to 5 squares.

Ignite the Shroud (fire, necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in the burst); +33 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 6d8 + 25 fire and necrotic damage, and the target is blinded (save ends). For each ally Volto kills with this attack, the damage increases by 5.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Volto's aura is deactivated and cannot be reactivated until the start of her next turn.

Master's Footwork ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Volto makes four basic attacks.

Move Actions

Shadow Step (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: Volto must be adjacent to a creature.
Effect: Volto teleports 10 squares to a square adjacent to another creature.

Triggered Actions

Darting Shadows ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy in Volto's aura misses her with an attack or makes an attack that doesn't include her as a target.
Effect (Opportunity Action): Volto makes a basic attack against the triggering enemy.

Skills Stealth +31
Str 29 (+24) **Dex** 32 (+26) **Wis** 25 (+22)
Con 26 (+23) **Int** 26 (+23) **Cha** 30 (+25)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Equipment leather armor, short sword

every hero remaining in the group, up to a maximum of twenty devils present at any one time. Then, on each of their turns until the end of the encounter, one devil emerges from the stalls for every hero remaining in the group.

When the final line is performed, read:

The candles in the theater suddenly snuff out, and then flicker back to life one by one. An unfamiliar figure now stands on the stage: a female devil dressed in flamboyant red leathers, wearing a painted ivory carnival mask.

"Blood for blood," she whispers. With a flick of her wrist, twenty howling daggers take to the air around her.

The masquerade is now complete, and the heroes must fight Contessa Volto.

Treasure

With Volto dead, the heroes can recover the last of the *howling daggers*. Contessa Volto wears an exquisite hooded cape that can change color from blood red to black (100 pp), a jeweled locket (400 pp), and an animated spider clasp that weaves platinum web patterns over the wearer's clothes while he or she sleeps (300 pp); all of which comprise treasure parcel 10.

Also of great value is her mask, which accounts for treasure parcel 1.

Legion Devil Legionnaire **Level 21 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 800

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +13
AC 37, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 32 **Perception** +11
Speed 7, teleport 3 Darkvision
Resist 15 fire

Traits

Squad Defense
The legionnaire gains a +2 bonus to all defenses while adjacent to at least one other legion devil.

Standard Actions

Longsword (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 14 damage.

Str 14 (+12) **Dex** 12 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+11)
Con 14 (+12) **Int** 10 (+10) **Cha** 12 (+11)
Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal
Equipment heavy shield, longsword, plate armor

Volto Mask Level 29 Rare

This beautifully crafted facemask gives your thoughts a clarity that no magic can deny.

Head Slot 2,625,000 gp

Properties

✦ Every 24 hours, the mask grants you 1 action point. If you fail to use this action point before the mask grants another, the action point is lost.
✦ You can spend up to 2 action points in one encounter.
✦ You gain a +3 item bonus to saving throws against being dazed, dominated, stunned, or weakened.

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Immediate Interrupt)
Trigger: You are dazed, dominated, stunned, or weakened.
Effect: You ignore one of the triggering conditions for its duration, and instead grant combat advantage during that time. If you choose to lose a healing surge when you use this power, it is not expended, but you cannot use it again until the end of the encounter.

Epilogue

With the hundred *howling daggers* in their possession, the heroes can return to Sigil and deliver the weapons to the nearest temple of Pelor. In doing so, they earn the favor of a god and the enmity of the King that Crawls.

Characters who keep the weapons for themselves do so at their own peril. Hunted by both sides, these renegades must struggle to find any sanctuary and might even fall under the corrupting influence of the blades. Prolonged exposure to the *daggers* makes their outlook slowly shift alignment toward evil, or they might develop a propensity for grotesque theatrics. If you own the *Book of Vile Darkness* supplement, consider using the corruption rules to adjudicate the characters' descent into villainy.

About the Author

Will Doyle's previous contributions to *Dungeon* magazine include "Tears of the Crocodile God" in *Dungeon* 209, "Glitterdust" in *Dungeon* 211, and "The Rolling Tomb" in *Dungeon* 215. Will and his girlfriend, Stacey, run a D&D blog at beholderpie.blogspot.co.uk.

The Star-Touched Grove

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 8-9

By Tyler Gelvin

Illustration by Christopher Burdett

Cartography by Jared Blando

Hongya, a young elf druid, swelled with pride when her order tasked her with the care of an ancient grove that was the primal heart of a larger forest. But unknown to her, the grove had recently been enchanted with a dark and powerful curse that was slowly siphoning the life from the great trees. By the time she realized that all was not well in the grove, the effect of the cursed heart had spread throughout the entire forest. Flowers withered, trees rotted, and songbirds fell out of the sky.

The grove that Hongya had sworn to protect was dying, and her rituals and herbalism were completely powerless to stop it. In despair, she forsook her ties to the natural world and called out a plea to the stars. One of them answered, and today "life" abounds in the grove again, but it is a twisted parody of the life that should inhabit the place.

The village of Woodbridge lies near the edge of a forest that the locals call the Neatwood. The corrupted grove is only a few hours' walk from this village. Woodbridge has always maintained a good relationship with the resident druidic keepers of the Neatwood. Hunters and loggers always carefully follow instructions about which trees to fell and which game to take, and in exchange, the druids keep the dangerous denizens of the wood at bay.

But one day, a sheep that had strayed into the forest came back sprouting tentacles and tried to eat the other sheep. A few of the farmers quickly banded together to put the beast down.

Synopsis

Belvo Halfbeard tasks the characters with investigating the spreading pseudolife near Woodbridge and finding out why Hongya has allowed this terror to happen.

While the characters are traveling through the greater forest, less than an hour from Woodbridge, some of the more aggressive new varieties of animal life attack. Then, as heroes draw close to the grove, the star Khirad, which answered Hongya, attempts to take control of them. When that encounter is over, the characters have a chance to use Hongya's garden to shake off Khirad's influence.

Finally, they confront Hongya in the ancient heart of the grove. She has been changed as much as any of her charges. She hates what she is doing and what she has become, but she is powerless to stop.

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Starting Play

When characters arrive in Woodbridge, farmers have brought the carcass of the tentacled sheep into town. A crowd of locals is loudly discussing what this means regarding their pact with the druids of the Neatwood. They agree that Hongya would never allow such an abomination to dwell in her forest. Its existence must mean that she is sick, injured, distracted, or maybe just incompetent. None of the townsfolk have guessed that she caused this horrid event.

Belvo Halfbeard, the dwarf who owns the town's only inn, is among those examining the dead sheep. As soon as he notices the characters, he recognizes them as adventurers and asks them to investigate the matter. He loves listening to himself talk, so it might take a while for him to get to the point.

When Belvo approaches the characters, read:
"New in town, eh?"says a portly, middle-aged dwarf. "Adventurers, by the look of ya. Sorry we're not more hospitable, but this thing's got us all flustered.

"Can't hardly blame folk for gettin' all riled up. We've heard of forests full of horrible monsters, but it's never been like that here in Woodbridge. Those druids always made the forest a safe place.

"Why, I remember when we used to take the family out to visit our druid in that old grove. The garden he kept was nice, too, even if I never had much use for plants that ain't for brewin' nor buildin'. But he's been dead a few years now. Just got us a new elf lady name of Hongya. She's gotta be livin' out there by the grove now.

"Seems that Hongya oughta be taking care of her forest better. Not very neighborly of her, turnin' our sheep into these crazy things. Hey, why don't you go check on Hongya to see if everythin's all right? Might be some daner, if there are more things like this lurkin' around, so I'll scrape up some sorta reward fer ya here—hazard pay an' whatnot.

"The trail's pretty clear. Ya just walk east outta town into the forest for three, four hours an' there ya are."

Encounter 1: Far Fauna

Combat Encounter Level 9 (2,000 XP)

Setup

2 slug rabbits (S)
3 tongue wolves (T)

Little natural life remains in this area of the Neatwood. The sickly oaks are the only reminder of what the forest should look like. Even the undergrowth has been taken over by knee-high clover plants that play tricks with space and perception. The area is also crawling with creatures that Hongya's grove corrupted. This star-touched fauna is immediately hostile to any natural life.

After the characters enter the forest, read:
A pack of small, yipping creatures is clustered around a branchless tree that leaks liquid light through cracks in its trunk. The sharp, cold illumination reveals that each little head sprouts rabbitlike ears and teeth, but the attached bodies are melded into an undifferentiated fuzzy mass. The creatures seem to sense that they are no longer alone, and the mass moves in with a chittering wail.

Star-touched rabbits, united into masses, are roaming the grove, busily destroying any natural life they can sink their teeth into. The nearby tonguewolves charge in after they hear the sounds of battle. They arrive at the positions indicated on the map key at the start of the third round of combat.

At the start of the third round, read:
With unearthly keening howls, three white-furred, wolf-like creatures rush toward the battle. Dozens of impossibly thin legs raise their bodies up to head height, so the smooth voids where their eyes should be are easy to see. Each of these creatures sports a writhing, spiked tongue so long that more than half its length is dragging along the ground.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light from the trees and far-clover, if not the sun.

Far Clover: The light that perpetually shines on these oversized clover plants comes from a different sun. A creature that occupies only squares containing far clover and a creature that occupies no squares containing far clover have total concealment from each other.

Ruined Trees: These dying trees are blocking terrain.

3 Tongue Wolves (T)	Level 9 Skirmisher
Medium aberrant beast	XP 400 each
HP 92; **Bloodied** 46	**Initiative** +11
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 19	**Perception** +8
Speed 8	Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ Barbed Tongue ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 2, or 4 while the tongue wolf is bloodied (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage, and the tongue wolf slides the target up to 2 squares, or 4 squares while the tongue wolf is bloodied.

Triggered Actions

Living Tongue ✦ Encounter

Trigger: The tongue wolf drops below 1 hit point.

Effect: (No Action): The tongue wolf dies, and a detached tongue appears in its former space. The tongue acts on the tongue wolf's initiative count and is worth no experience points.

Str 17 (+7)	**Dex** 20 (+9)	**Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 12 (+5)	**Int** 3 (+0)	**Cha** 8 (+3)
Alignment evil	**Languages** –	

Detached Tongue	Level 9 Minion Skirmisher
Medium aberrant beast (blind)	XP 100
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	**Initiative** +11
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 19	**Perception** +3
Speed 6	Blindsight 5

Standard Actions

⊕ Tongue Tied ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 8 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 17) until the start of the tongue's next turn.

Sustain Standard: The tongue sustains the grab, the target takes 8 damage, and the tongue shifts 1 square, pulling the grabbed creature into a space adjacent to the tongue.

Str 17 (+7)	**Dex** 20 (+9)	**Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 12 (+5)	**Int** 3 (+0)	**Cha** 3 (+0)
Alignment evil	**Languages** –	

2 Slug Rabbits (S)	Level 9 Brute
Large aberrant beast	XP 400 each
HP 120; **Bloodied** 60	**Initiative** +5
AC 21, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18	**Perception** +8
Speed 6	Blindsight 10

Traits

Squeeze

The rabbit can occupy the same space as another creature, and an enemy can enter its space (difficult terrain). The rabbit cannot be pulled, pushed, or slid by melee or ranged attacks. While squeezing, the rabbit moves at full speed rather than half speed, doesn't take a -5 penalty to attack rolls, and doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Mass of Teeth

A creature that starts its turn prone in the slug rabbit's space takes 5 damage.

Standard Actions

⊕ Overwhelm ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 9 damage, and the target falls prone.

Hopping Wave ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞

Effect: The rabbit jumps a number of squares equal to its speed, then it uses *overwhelm* against each creature in its space.

Str 16 (+7)	**Dex** 13 (+5)	**Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 20 (+9)	**Int** 3 (+0)	**Cha** 6 (+2)
Alignment evil	**Languages** –	

Encounter 2: Star Garden

Exploration Encounter

The following occurs when the characters come within 100 feet of the grove, no matter what time of day it is.

As the characters near the grove, read:

The stars are out. They are so close that their cold light burns. Maddening chimes issue from them just on the edge of hearing.

Then one of the stars turns its fell gaze upon you. Its utter contempt crushes your own thoughts and shoves them aside. Whispers and light overwhelm your senses. The star's presence takes root in your very soul.

Khirad, a malevolent star, has changed each of the characters. Roll 1d6 for each character and consult the list below for results. Alternatively, feel free to assign one result to each character instead. Read the italicized text corresponding to each character's result aloud.

⚀ ⚁ ⚂ Khirad's Hunger

The star hollowed out a place in your mind, and now only hunger fills it. The ravening hunger makes it difficult to concentrate.

Whenever the character rolls initiative, he or she is slowed and takes ongoing 15 psychic damage (save ends both).

⚃ ⚄ Khirad's Voice

The star whispers the secrets of the universe and necessary courses of action to you. You feel a desire to comply.

Whenever the character rolls initiative, he or she is dominated (save ends). You choose his or her actions.

⁞⁞ Khirad's Form

The light of the star fills you. You fade into the light.

Whenever the character rolls initiative, he or she becomes insubstantial and weakened, and casts bright light for 5 squares (save ends all).

A Remove Affliction ritual can cure the affliction Khirad has imposed on a character. The characters can also use the plants in Hongya's garden to repair this damage. If left uncured, Khirad's afflictions fade after the characters take an extended rest anywhere outside the grove. Khirad again afflicts uncured characters who return to the grove (with the same effects as before) until the place has been cleansed.

Finding the Garden

The location of Hongya's garden is such that visitors from Woodbridge would naturally pass though it on their way up to the grove. Therefore, the characters go through the garden unless they deliberately avoid it.

When the characters approach the garden, read:
The path continues through a garden in which several odd plants grow. Shiny black beetles, the size of small dogs, tend the unusual flora.

Inform any players whose characters are suffering from Khirad's afflictions that the sight of these plants causes the presence in their minds to recoil violently.

Have the players roll initiative, but the only dangers in this encounter are the star effects. Characters can attack and kill the beetles (defense 10, 1 hp each), but they neither fight back nor flee.

Ingredients

The heroes can find five star-touched ingredients within Hongya's garden. Characters can eat these items individually or mix them together to produce an effect.

Eyeball Plant: Bunches of glistening eyeballs dangle like fruit from several small, conical plants with no leaves. The eyeballs gaze about, staring with unnerving intensity at the characters. The horrid fruit of this vine tastes deliciously sweet, like chocolate-covered cherries. If the eyeballs are consumed with no other ingredient, they have no effect.

Characters experiencing Khirad's Hunger feel a strong desire to avoid eating these eyes, despite an overwhelming compulsion to eat almost everything else in the garden. If such a character eats an eyeball along with some lizard grass (see below), the combination cures Khirad's Hunger.

Concentrated Starlight: A bucket contains liquid light far too bright to look at directly. If consumed alone, the liquid burns, requiring the imbiber to succeed on a DC 17 Endurance check or lose a healing surge. Characters who share Khirad's Form feel an aversion to this light, but they also feel thirsty when thinking about it. Consuming a honey snail (see below) dipped in liquid starlight cures Khirad's Form and does not require an Endurance check.

Lizard Grass: Several planters contain grass whose blades resemble tiny lizard tails. If eaten alone, the tails taste like blood and allow a character to voluntarily lose a healing surge to gain temporary hit points equal to the lost surge's value. These temporary hit points last until the character takes an extended rest.

The grass undulates as if a breeze is stirring it if a character experiencing Khirad's Hunger or Khirad's Voice stands within 1 foot of the planters in which the grass grows. Lizard grass cures Khirad's Hunger if eaten with the fruit of the eyeball plant, or Khirad's Voice if eaten with an idea seed (see below).

Idea Seed: A small tree bears pomegranate-like fruit whose arils have no discernible flavor. A character who eats a seed from this plant with no other ingredient must make a DC 17 Arcana check. Success gives the character a random useful insight, which grants a +5 bonus to the next skill check the character makes before 5 minutes pass. If the check fails, the character loses a healing surge.

Characters who hear Khirad's Voice have a hard time thinking about the tree, and they forget its location every time they look away. If such a character eats an idea seed with lizard grass, the combination cures Khirad's Voice but does not grant insight.

Honey Snail: A sweet, syrupy liquid coats the bodies of these plump snails. A character who eats one can feel the snail continue to wriggle for several minutes after swallowing it, but it produces no other effect if eaten alone.

Characters who share Khirad's Form can hear the snails whispering about the stars. If such a character dips a snail in the liquid starlight, then eats it, the combination cures Khirad's Form.

Leaving the Garden

When the characters are ready to move on, read:
A well-traveled path leads into an area of the grove where the trees are much older and larger. A queasy intuition suggests that the source of the corruption lies down that path.

Encounter 3: Heart of Corruption

Combat Encounter Level 9 (2,300 XP)

Setup

Hongya, corrupted druid (H)
3 worm porcupines (W)

Hongya has just imbued several porcupines with the essence of the stars. They defend her even as she seeks her own death in battle.

When the characters enter the grove, read:
The stars have clustered above, shedding dazzling light over a circle of ancient trees here. Then the blinding light of the stars recedes, revealing four monstrous figures in the center of the circle.

Three of the grotesque creatures resemble elongated, wormlike porcupines with no discernible limbs. Each of their quills is as long as a human forearm and covered in rings of wicked barbs. The quills twitch and sway erratically.

The fourth figure is a large bear, with a pair of long tentacles replacing each leg. Two lines of large eyes filled to bursting with captured starlight flow all the way down its back.

The bear turns and calls out, "At last you have come! In Melora's name, I beg you to end my torment and my life."

"She is mine!" snarls another voice.

Hongya fights until she drops to 0 hit points.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light, from the stars just overhead.

Fell Ether: A creature that starts its turn in a square of fell ether (white patches on the map) takes 10 psychic damage but gains a +1 power bonus to attack rolls and a +5 power bonus to damage rolls until the start of that creature's next turn.

Ancient Trees: These huge trees are blocking terrain.

Conclusion

If Hongya drops below 1 hit point, the stars abandon her and retreat back where they belong. The grove reverts to its natural state, and the fell ether dissipates. The worm porcupines revert to normal and sidle off into the forest.

Concluding the Adventure

With Hongya subdued or killed, no more aberrations emerge from the grove. Either Hongya (if she is still alive), or the mourning villagers of Woodbridge can reward the heroes with an appropriate treasure parcel. In addition, if the characters brought Hongya back to town (alive or dead), Belvo Halfbeard offers the characters free drinks any time they are in town.

About the Author

Tyler Gelvin has written many adventures for both paper and electronic games over the years, but this is his first time doing so professionally. He lives in San Diego, California with his wife, Cassandra.

3 Worm Porcupines (W)		**Level 10 Soldier**
Medium aberrant beast		XP 500 each
HP 104; **Bloodied** 52		**Initiative** +8
AC 26, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 19		**Perception** +9
Speed 5		Low-light vision
Standard Actions		
Quill ✦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 or ranged 5 (one creature); +15 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 6, and ongoing 5 damage and the target is slowed (save ends both)		
Minor Actions		
Wriggling Quills ✦ At-Will		
Effect: Close burst 5 (each creature affected by *quill* in the burst); the porcupine slides the target up to 2 squares.		
Str 21 (+10)	**Dex** 12 (+6)	**Wis** 9 (+4)
Con 16 (+8)	**Int** 3 (+1)	**Cha** 9 (+4)
Alignment evil	**Languages** –	

Hongya, Corrupted Druid		**Level 9 Elite Controller**
Large aberrant humanoid, elf		XP 800
HP 190; **Bloodied** 95		**Initiative** +9
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21		**Perception** +13
Speed 7		Low-light vision
Resist 5 psychic		
Saving Throws +2; **Actions Points** 1		
Standard Actions		
Tentacle ✦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +14 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 9 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 17). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 5 damage.		
Double Attack ✦ At-Will		
Effect: Hongya uses *tentacle* twice.		
Call down the Stars (radiant) **✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⚅		
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +15 vs. Will		
Hit: 2d8 + 9 radiant damage, and the target can choose to be blinded (save ends) or dazed (save ends).		
Miss: Half damage.		
Minor Actions		
Feed to the Void (psychic) **✦ Recharge** when no creature is removed from play by this power		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature grabbed by Hongya); +12 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: The grab ends, and the target is removed from play and takes ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends both). When a creature saves, it is immune to this power until the end of the encounter.		
Skills Nature +13		
Str 17 (+7)	**Dex** 20 (+9)	**Wis** 18 (+8)
Con 15 (+6)	**Int** 13 (+5)	**Cha** 18 (+8)
Alignment evil	**Languages** Common, Elven	

Dark Legacy of Evard

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 1-3

By Richard Baker

Illustrations by Eric Belisle, Ben Wootten, Rob Alexander, Jim Nelson, Matt Cavotta, Daarken, Lee Moyer, Dave Allsop, Julie Dillon, Brian Hagan, Steven Belledin, Brian Snoddy, Ralph Horsley, Eric Deschamps, Emrah Elmasli, and Steve Ellis

Cartography by Mike Schley, Jason A. Engle, and Chippy

This adventure was created for the Dungeons & Dragons Encounters™ program. The mini-campaign format with encounters designed to be played in one-encounter sessions has been preserved here.

Preparing for Play

Read through the Background and Synopsis to get an idea of the general storyline, the progression of the plot, and the pacing of the adventures. Also, read through the encounter information before starting play for any given session. Familiarize yourself with the NPCs, monsters, and tactical map.

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Creating a Character

A first-time player can bring a 1st-level character created using the rules found in the *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*™ rulebook, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*™ rulebook, or the *Player's Option: Heroes of Shadow*™ rulebook. In addition, players can use rules presented in *Dragon*® magazine in support of those products.

At the end of each session, award experience points and treasure.

Treasure

As the characters progress through the mini-campaign, they have the opportunity to gain treasure in the form of gold pieces, valuables, and magic items. Whenever characters discover treasure, follow the instructions provided in the adventure. Use the following rules to divide treasure among the characters. All the magic items in this adventure come from the *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* rulebook or the *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms* rulebook.

Awarding Magic Items: When the characters find a nonconsumable magic item, the players can decide which character receives it. Usually, these decisions will be easy, since certain items are better suited for certain characters. If this is not the case, then you should assign the new item to a character who has no nonconsumable magic items. If two or more characters lack nonconsumable magic items, have each of those players roll a d20. The character of the high roller receives the new item.

Selling Items: If none of the characters wants a particular magic item, the group can sell it at the end of the session using the rules from *Rules Compendium*™. Divide the gold pieces received evenly among the party members.

When to Gear Up: Characters can buy equipment at the start of each chapter.

Background

This adventure is a story of three wizards: Nathaire, an ambitious mage eager to master the powers of shadow; the infamous Evard, who is supposedly buried in the cemetery of Duponde; and Vontarin, once Evard's rival. The player characters are travelers who are passing the night in Duponde. Another traveler, Nathaire, has followed rumors that Evard is buried in Duponde. He plans to perform a ritual to trap Evard's soul in a magic orb, hoping to gain Evard's mastery of shadow magic.

Unfortunately for Nathaire, Evard is not buried in Evard's Tomb. Evard destroyed Vontarin in a duel almost fifty years ago. Seeing an opportunity to throw other enemies off his trail, Evard allowed the terrified townspeople to believe that he had died, not Vontarin. After arranging for the remains to be interred under a marker with his name on it, Evard wove wards of umbral magic over Vontarin's resting place. The master of shadows then left Duponde. Over the years, the citizens came to believe that Vontarin left after defeating Evard, since neither wizard has since been seen in Duponde.

Summary

Dark Legacy of Evard is organized into thirteen sessions, summarized in this section.

Session 1: Weary from travel, the adventurers pass the night in the town of Duponde. They meet a few fellow travelers, including the wizard Nathaire, who tells them the story of Evard. Later that night, the characters are awakened when Duponde and its surroundings are suddenly shifted into the Shadowfell. Gargoyles adorning the inn come to life and attack.

Session 2: The adventurers explore the town and discover that Duponde is no longer in the world. They learn not only that Nathaire's valet, Remy, has fled the town, but also that the local armory is infested with shadow monsters. The characters face a choice: Follow Remy or clear out the armory so the guards can arm themselves.

Session 3: Characters continue with the choice they made in Session 2. If they pursued Remy, they catch up to their quarry in the woods outside town. They find Nathaire's journal, which helps them later in the adventure. If the adventurers remained in town to battle monsters, it's a fight against spiders and shadows on Duponde's streets.

Session 4: Regardless of which path characters took in Sessions 2 and 3, it's now clear that the trouble started at Evard's Tomb. The characters make their way to Duponde's graveyard, battling restless undead. Evard's Tomb has been opened, but the skeleton is still in its coffin, and no sign of Nathaire can be found.

Session 5: A Vistani boy comes to the characters and leads them to the home of the seer Mother Grivelda. Grivelda explains that Duponde now suffers under a powerful curse. She tells the characters that Evard isn't buried in the graveyard, his enemy Vontarin is. Unless the characters can placate Vontarin's soul, the Shadowfell might claim Duponde and its people. While the characters are visiting the wise woman, a pack of wolves attacks.

Session 6: Following the advice of Mother Grivelda, the adventurers, searching for clues to Nathaire's intentions, seek out Vontarin's long-abandoned manor. They find that the forgotten manse is now home to a band of tieflings who welcome no guests.

Session 7: The characters continue their exploration of Vontarin's manor, fighting its current occupants. The explorers learn that Nathaire came to the manse but found little.

Session 8: At sundown, Duponde again slips into the shadows, and the monsters threatening the town return. Before the adventurers can resume their search for Nathaire, they have to defend the town once more. They must decide where they can do the most good.

Session 9: Vontarin's ghost, still possessing Nathaire's body, decides to drive off the townsfolk of Duponde. He animates a wave of undead attackers and sends them against the town. The characters must defend Duponde against a force of skeletons.

Session 10: The attack of the skeletons provides a key clue to the location of Nathaire's lair. These undead came from the crypts of the ruined Saint Avarthil Monastery. The adventurers can visit the abbey's crypts and battle more of Nathaire's lackeys.

Session 11: The characters continue their exploration of Saint Avarthil Monastery, battling more of Nathaire's servants. The adventurers might learn that the friars removed several of Vontarin's possessions from his manor when the wizard disappeared.

Session 12: Characters finish their search of the abbey, and they corner Nathaire in the library. They battle Nathaire and the creatures serving him. When the characters defeat Nathaire, they find that the purple orb he carries traps Vontarin's hateful soul. The curse remains unbroken, however.

Session 13: Vontarin's soul must be freed from the orb at the place where his body is buried, or else it might roam free and the curse might never be broken. The adventurers shatter it, but a ghostly remnant of Vontarin appears and fights furiously against being laid to rest. With the defeat of Vontarin's ghost, the ritual is undone. The mage rests again, and the town returns to the world for good.

The Despair Deck

The Shadowfell: Gloomwrought and Beyond™ presents a new component for a DM to enhance his or her game. The Despair Deck represents the unnatural behaviors and neuroses that affect those who visit or live in the Shadowfell. The deck contains 30 cards with names such as "Hopeless," "Paranoid," and "Forgetful." Each card has an effect that temporarily hampers a character, and when overcome, provides a boon. At certain junctures in *Dark Legacy of Evard,*

DUPONDE

Duponde is a town of about 1,000 inhabitants on the banks of the White River. Many buildings within the town's crumbling walls have been abandoned in the last hundred years, especially in the southern half of town. Heavy brush and trees grow in and among the dilapidated houses, including those that are in still-occupied areas.

1. Walls, Gates, and Roads: A 12-foot wall of fieldstone encloses Duponde, and a rickety wooden walk lines the inside for defenders to fire over the wall top. The walls are in bad shape, with countless gaps. A guard normally attends each of the three gates.

Roads lead north, south, and west from the town. A pair of ancient bridges leads east, continuing the King's Road, but they were destroyed in recent flooding.

Various locales—such as the Vistani farmhouse, the forgotten manor, and the old monastery—stand within a few hours of Duponde.

2. The Old Owl Inn: The Old Owl Inn stands near the town's North Gate, a large yard surrounding it. This location is where the characters are staying during the adventure. The Old Owl Inn is operated by Tilda, who employs several cooks, barkeeps, and stable hands.

3. Chapel of Peace: The Chapel of Peace is not far from the Old Owl Inn. Brother Zelan and two young acolytes maintain this rundown shrine. Zelan is an old, fat, stubborn Pelorite with a blustering manner, but he's wiser than he lets on.

4. General Store: The General Store is down the street from the Old Owl Inn, near the Town Courtyard. It is operated by a grumpy dwarf named Krugan. He has standard adventuring gear for sale, as well as common magic items. He is cranky because a band of tieflings has been intercepting caravans bringing goods to his store.

5. Town Square: The Town Square is normally a meeting place for the residents of Duponde.

6. Town Armory: The armory sits near the Town Square, alongside several aqueducts that bring water from the river. Marshal Grimbold's offices are here.

7. Graveyard: This large cemetery in the northwest of town is where Evard's Tomb stands.

8. Lady's House: A large hilltop manor in the middle of town is home to Lady Celice Arnaud, hereditary ruler of Duponde. Lady Arnaud is a soft-spoken human woman of sixty who keeps four watchmen and a handful of servants and clerks in attendance. Duponde's guards answer to her, but Lady Arnaud allows Grimbold to manage the town's defenses.

0 50 250 feet 500

players are prompted to draw cards. If the players still have their cards at the end of the session, have them record the effects of the card on their D&D Encounters Play Tracker, and ask them to return the cards. They'll have an opportunity to overcome the effects in future.

Adjusting the Encounters

Chapter 1 assumes you have a normal party of five 1s-level characters and players familiar with the Dungeons & Dragons game. Chapter 2 assumes a party of 1st- and 2nd-level characters. Chapter 3 assumes a party of 2nd- and 3rd-level characters. If you group doesn't fit that assumption, make adjustments using the following guidelines.

Weak Party: You have a weak party if it consists of four characters or if most of the players are new to D&D. In that case, remove the lowest-level or least important nonminion monster from the encounter.

Strong Party: You have a strong party at your table if it consists of six characters, or most or all of the players are veteran Dungeons & Dragons players who like added challenge. If you have a strong party, add one of the simplest nonminion monsters among those in the encounter whose level most closely matches the encounter level.

Chapter 1

At the beginning of *Dark Legacy of Evard*, each character starts with full hit points and healing surges, as well as 1 action point.

Session 1: The Old Owl

Characters begin the adventure in the common room of the Old Owl Inn in Duponde. The town sits on the banks of the White River, a few days' travel north of Harkenwold. Acting as couriers, the adventurers are carrying correspondence from Fallcrest to the city of Sarthel. Duponde is just a brief stopover on their journey.

When you're ready to begin play, read:

Tired after a long day of marching in cold rain, you're warming yourselves by the hearth of the Old Owl Inn in the town of Duponde. You've been traveling the King's Road for a week, heading south to the city of Sarthel with correspondence from Lord Markelhay, the Lord Warden of Fallcrest.

When you arrived in Duponde, you discovered that recent flooding in the Nentir River had damaged the city's two bridges. Now, you must wait a few days while the stonemasons repair the bridge.

Prompt the players to introduce their characters and describe them. Ask whether the characters have

Character Profile: Grimbold

Marshal of Duponde, Grimbold is the town's chief lawkeeper and captain of the militia. During ordinary times he's little more than a night watchman who supervises a few gate-keepers and carries the keys to the armory.

Key Traits: Skeptical, stubborn, and smarter than he looks. Grimbold doesn't look like much of a leader, but he's a steady man in a crisis and well respected by the townsfolk. He is a keen observer and doesn't miss much going on in town, but tends to keep his opinions to himself.

Goal: Grimbold wants to organize a defense of the town against the immediate threats posed by the Shadowfell and solve the mystery of what happened and why. Without the help of the heroes, his only recourse would be to abandon the town and hope that some of the people survive.

Motivation: Protect the people of Duponde. Grimbold has lived in this town all of his life, and the townsfolk are his neighbors and kin. He's wise enough to ask for help if someone else can do a better job of it than he can.

Fears: Grimbold is afraid of making things worse by making a poor decision. He is aware that he knows nothing about dire curses, angry ghosts, and shadow magic. Evard's curse is his worst nightmare—a threat he doesn't know how to fight.

Weaknesses: Doubt and hesitation. Grimbold second-guesses himself constantly, especially in dealing with matters he knows are beyond him.

Mannerisms and Physical Characteristics: The marshal is dour and close-mouthed, rarely using two words when one will do. He is a tall, round-faced man of about forty, slow and deliberate in both speech and action. He wears leather armor and carries a crossbow and a cudgel, which he replaces for old mail and a plain sword when things go wrong.

CHARACTER PROFILE: NATHAIRE

An ambitious, talented wizard, Nathaire comes from an aristocratic family in the city of Sarthel. He says little about his true purpose for being in Duponde, because he doesn't want to deal with any "unreasonable" fears or concerns from locals.

Key Traits: Clever, confident, and somewhat patronizing. Nathaire is full of himself, but he stops short of picking fights by being insulting. If a hero takes offense to something he says, the wizard swallows his pride and provides a reasonably sincere apology.

Goal: Perform the rite to capture the remnants of Evard's shadow-powers for his own. Nathaire anticipates nothing but success, and expects to leave Duponde in a day, perhaps two.

Motivation: Ambition and a hunger for magical power. Mastering Evard's powers would make him a very powerful mage. Nathaire isn't out to hurt anybody in Duponde; as far as he knows, his ritual shouldn't have any effect on the town.

Fears: Delay and ignorance. Nathaire knows what he wants and he's ready to take it. He worries that thickheaded authorities and benighted commoners couldn't possibly understand the importance of his research, and might impede his efforts,

Weaknesses: Overconfidence and impatience. Nathaire thinks he knows more than he does and is anxious to put his project into motion.

Mannerisms and Physical Characteristics: Precise speech, big vocabulary, sharp wit, and expensive tastes. Nathaire is clearly a man of high breeding, and like many aristocrats, he's condescending toward social inferiors. He is a tall, good-looking fellow of about thirty, clean-shaven, with dark hair and dark eyes.

agreed to serve as couriers, or are just traveling with characters who have. Take a moment to reinforce the idea that the characters are already acquainted if not friends. They share a few rooms in the upper floor of the inn.

If characters are curious about the messages they're carrying, they can break the seals and read the missives. The letters deal with negotiating the marriage of Markelhay's son Ernesto to Vespa, a noblewoman of Sarthel.

When the players are ready, read:

Shortly after dark, the rain lets up and wind rises outside. It rattles the windowpanes and moans eerily in the chimney. The common room begins to empty as the locals finish their ale and make their way back to their homes. Soon, the only people remaining in the Old Owl's common room are a trio of dwarf travelers, a dark-haired young man in the robes of a scholar and his halfling servant, a burly guard in a brown cloak, the barkeep, a gray-bearded old man, and the Old Owl's proprietress, a stout woman of middle years who introduced herself as Tilda Grenfield when you took lodging for the night.

The guard finishes a mug of hot cider. "Think I'd best be on my way," he says to Tilda.

"Take care of yourself, Grimbold," Tilda replies. "We'll shut the tap early, I think. It's no night for good folk to be out and about."

"Aye?" one of the dwarves asks sourly. "And why is that?"

"Because ghosts walk abroad on nights such as this, friend," the guard answers.

The young scholar looks up. "Could the ghost of Evard be among them?" he asks.

"Some say," Grimbold replies. "You might know more about that than I do."

"Hush, both of you!" says Tilda. "That's a name better left unspoken."

Grimbold packs up to head out on rounds, but he's willing to engage the characters in conversation before leaving.

Others in the Old Owl

The people in the inn sit up a little longer. The characters can engage them in discussion, or vice versa.

The Dwarves: *"Ghosts? Nonsense."*

Katha, Kristyd, and Kildrak are siblings—two sisters and a brother—who are skilled stonemasons. They've come here from Hammerfast to perform repairs on Duponde's bridges. They bicker with each other about trivial matters. They scoff at ghost stories.

Harald, the Barkeep: *"Travelers from the north, eh? What brings you to Duponde?"*

Friendly and talkative, if not too bright, Harald was once a trapper and hunter in the nearby forest. He gave it up and took work at the Old Owl years ago after he lamed himself with one of his own traps. Harald knows little about Evard, and he is very superstitious.

Marshal Grimbold: *"I've seen some strange things, but Duponde's a quiet town. We like it that way."*

Grimbold is a big, round-faced man of forty or so. He's the leader of the town's militia. For his duties, he wears leather armor, and he carries a crossbow and a large cudgel. Grimbold suspects a dark influence in

EVARD THE BLACK

A character who succeeds on a DC 19 History or Arcana check knows the following about Evard:

Evard is a famous wizard who was active several decades ago. He is renowned for his mastery of shadow magic; his most famous spell is Evard's Black Tentacles. He was ambitious and cunning, and although rumors of his death have circulated, none have ever been confirmed. He had many enemies, the most powerful of which was the wizard Mordenkainen.

NATHAIRE'S STORY ARC

For much of the adventure, the characters are trying to discover where the wizard Nathaire is and what he's up to. Here's a summary of his actions during the adventure.

Session 1 (first night): Nathaire attempts a shadow-magic ritual at Evard's Tomb in the middle of the night. The ritual goes wrong, and Vontarin—the wizard buried in Evard's Tomb—possesses Nathaire. Duponde is pulled into the Shadowfell. Nathaire's servant, Remy, flees.

Session 2 to 4 (first night): Under the control of Vontarin's soul, Nathaire calls a small number of dark ones to his service, using a ritual he knew as Vontarin. He goes to Vontarin's manor, intending to arm himself with Vontarin's old spellbooks and implements. He finds that the old possessions are missing, but he determines that the monks of Saint Avarthil Monastery removed the items years ago.

Session 5 through 7 (first day): At daybreak, Nathaire remains in the Shadowfell when Duponde returns to the world. Evard's curse keeps him there.

Sessions 8 and 9 (second night): At sunset, Duponde returns to the Shadowfell. Nathaire goes to the ruins of Saint Avarthil Monastery, and he begins looking for the items and tomes that were removed from Vontarin's house. He begins by animating the skeletal remains in the monastery's crypts and dispatching them into Duponde to drive off anyone who might interfere. At daybreak, Nathaire again remains in the Shadowfell when Duponde returns to the world.

Sessions 10 to 12 (third night): When night falls again, Duponde appears in the Shadowfell. Nathaire resumes his search of the monastery, looking for Vontarin's old treasures. The characters catch him.

Session 13 (third night): Duponde remains caught in the Shadowfell until the characters shatter Nathaire's orb, reuniting Vontarin's soul with his physical remains, returning the ghost to its eternal rest, and returning Duponde to the world.

Duponde from time to time. but he thinks that if people use common sense, they have little to worry about.

Tilda Grenfield: *"Never mind that talk. Just enjoy the fire and make yourselves at home!"*

Short and stout, Tilda is a friendly chatterbox of a woman about fifty years of age. Her husband died a couple of years back, leaving her to run the Old Owl with a handful of cooks, barkeeps, and stable hands. It has been hard, but she's making a good go of it. She's a clever, insightful woman who knows the town's history and prefers to let it stay buried.

Nathaire: *"It's fascinating—the most ordinary town at first glance, but oh, the secrets it harbors!"*

Nathaire is an ambitious wizard from the city of Sarthel. A tall, thirty-year-old man with dark hair and dark eyes, he comes from an aristocratic family. He is clever, intense, and arrogant. His servant is a loyal halfling named Remy, who never leaves Nathaire's side. Nathaire claims to be in Duponde to research the story of Evard.

Spinning Stories

Depending on which people the characters talk to, they might hear some or all of the following.

Ghosts (Harald, Grimbold, Tilda): *"Every now and then, on cold autumn nights, people see things around the town—a pale specter that freezes the heart with dread and disappears, tree branches that seem to reach out, or black shadows that fall where they shouldn't be and follow after those who see them. Some people have been terribly frightened, but no one's ever been hurt. Nothing to it, probably."*

Evard's Tomb (Grimbold, Tilda): *"Forty, fifty years back, a wizard named Vontarin lived here in Duponde. A rival, Evard—a notorious fellow, as wizards go—came to Duponde to destroy him. They fought one night with black magic and left the old monastery in ruins with their spells. Vontarin was never seen again after that night, but the friars found Evard dead in the wreckage and buried him in the town graveyard."*

Evard (Nathaire): *"Evard was a powerful wizard who disappeared about fifty years ago. His specialty was magic infused with the power of shadow, and he devised several new spells—perhaps you've heard of Evard's Black Tentacles? I've been trying to piece together the story of his adventures for years, and the trail led me here. I never expected to find his tomb in a forgettable little town like Duponde. Now I can fill in the end of the story and—between you and me—leave this backwater."*

Nathaire (Grimbold, Harald, Tilda): *"A nice enough fellow, although he's used to better than Duponde and makes that a little too clear. He's been here for a few days. Pays his way and even spreads some extra around. Says he's studying up on Evard's Tomb."*

Insight Checks

If players want to use Insight skill to try to learn more, allow DC 12 Insight checks.

The Dwarves: Katha, Kristyd, and Kildrak seem unimpressed by small-town ghost stories.

Harald: He's not terribly bright, and seems like someone who believes anything he's told.

Grimbold: He's not truly worried, but he's happy to stay inside out of the weather for a chat.

Tilda: She's a little spooked, and doesn't want to scare herself silly with more ghost stories.

Nathaire: He admires Evard, but thinks a wizard of Evard's power shouldn't have been defeated so easily. He believes the townsfolk don't understand the importance of Evard's Tomb.

Other Actions

If the characters decide to look around the area, accompany Grimbold on his rounds, set a guard, or head straight out to visit the graveyard, nothing out of the ordinary happens. It's a cold, cloudy, windy night. Duponde is an ordinary town, now buttoned up for the evening. The other people staying at the tavern go to bed, and nothing happens until you're ready to begin the encounter.

Midnight Madness

Characters can talk to any of the people remaining in the common room, or they can go to bed. When the players are finished talking, their characters turn in for the night.

In the middle of the night, Nathaire and his servant slip out of the inn through one of the back doors, or out the window of Nathaire's room. They go to the graveyard, and then Nathaire's ritual sets events in motion. When you're ready to begin, read:

In the middle of the night, a powerful sensation rouses you. It feels like you're being wrenched in multiple directions without the ability to orient yourself. Nothing in the room is missing, but furnishings are subtly out of place, the air is cold, and the walls have gone slightly askew. Candles and lamps are strangely dim, and shadows press in from all sides.

Characters can quickly dress and arm themselves if they were sleeping. Proceed to the next encounter, **Shadows Gather.**

Shadows Gather

Encounter Level 1

Setup

3 animated gargoyles (G)
2 shadow stalkers (S)

If players ask about the strange lurching sensation or why things seem dark and distorted, allow a DC 12 Arcana check. A successful character realizes that the inn and its surroundings have passed into the Shadowfell, a phenomenon known as shadowfall.

As characters start downstairs, read:
A scream of terror erupts from the inn's common room downstairs, followed by cackles and the breaking of crockery. The Old Owl is under attack!

The presence of the gargoyles and the shadows are side effects of the shadowfall. Don't place the shadows on the map until they become visible.

As characters enter the taproom, read:
The old barkeep, Harald, is motionless on the floor at the foot of the stairs. No one else is here, but small, winged creatures flutter around the room. You realize that they are the carved gargoyles that adorned the inn's doorway.

3 Animated Gargoyles (G)	Level 1 Skirmisher
Small shadow animate	
HP 30; **Bloodied** 15	**Initiative** +5
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12	**Perception** +1
Speed 6, fly 6	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 3 damage (2d6 + 5 against prone targets), and the target can't make opportunity attacks against the gargoyle until the end of its next turn.	
⸸ **Harry** ✦ **Encounter**	
Effect: The gargoyle shifts up to 2 squares.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 3 damage, and the target falls prone. The target is dazed until the end of the gargoyle's next turn.	
Str 10 (+0) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+1)	
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 7 (-2) **Cha** 8 (-1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	

Tactics

Animated Gargoyles: These creatures work together. One gargoyle each round uses *harry* to knock a character prone, and the others swoop in to claw at those on the ground.

Shadow Stalkers: The shadows are hidden at the start of the encounter. To detect them, a character must succeed on a DC 20 Perception check. They use *shadow stalk* to enter the fight, each picking out its own victim. As long as its shadow stalk lasts, the shadow attacks its victim with *shadowy touch*. When the target saves, the shadow flits back to a place where it can hide and then attack again.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The fireplace and several oil lamps cast dim light over the area. Outside the inn, it's dark. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

Bar, Bed, and Table: These are difficult terrain.

Doors: The doors are closed but unlocked.

Fireplaces: A creature that enters a fireplace square takes 1d6 fire damage from hot coals.

Furniture: Furnished squares are difficult terrain.

2 Shadow Stalkers (S)	Level 3 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid	
HP 25; **Bloodied** 12	**Initiative** +9
AC 15, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14	**Perception** +3
Speed 8; phasing	Darkvision
Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Traits	
Born of Shadows	
The stalker can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has partial concealment instead of needing total concealment.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Shadowy Touch** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d8 + 6 necrotic damage.	
⸸ **Shadow Stalk** (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** when the stalker uses *shadow step*	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 8 necrotic damage, and the stalker shifts into the target's space and melds with its shadow (save ends). While the stalker is melded with the target's shadow, it remains in the target's space and moves with the target without provoking opportunity attacks. The stalker also gains a +4 bonus to all defenses and a +5 bonus to attack rolls against the target. When the target saves, the stalker appears in a square adjacent to the target.	
Triggered Actions	
Shadow Step (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: A living creature within 5 squares of the stalker drops to below 1 hit point.	
Effect (Free Action): The stalker teleports to a square adjacent to the triggering creature and gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Stealth +10	
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 19 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+3)	
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+1)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common	

Conclusion

Harald is unconscious—the gargoyles attacked him. He can be roused with a successful DC 12 Heal check, or he wakes up on his own ten minutes later. A quick check of the inn reveals that Tilda and the dwarves are fine. Grimbold is, presumably, out on his rounds. Nathaire and Remy are missing.

Reward

Each character gains 250 XP for interacting with people in the tavern and for battling the monsters.

Session 2: Witching Hour

Duponde and its surroundings are no longer in the world. Old warding magic that Evard laid over the place where he buried his rival Vontarin has pulled the town into the Shadowfell.

This session begins with the characters gathered in the common room of the Old Owl Inn. The night outside is supernaturally gloomy, cold, and menacing. Other denizens of the Old Owl—Tilda, Harald, and the three dwarf travelers—are ready to barricade themselves inside until morning. No sign can be found of the scholar, Nathaire, or his servant.

When you're ready to begin, remind the players where they are and what happened last time, then ask them what they'd like to do. Allow the characters to explore the inn and its surroundings for a short time. When you're ready to continue, go to Grimbold's Return.

Into the Shadows

This is a chance for the characters to study their circumstances and see exactly what sort of trouble Duponde is in. Possible alternatives include:

Wait Inside the Old Owl

No answers are to be found at the inn. Tilda, Harald, and the dwarves remain inside, barricading the common room against more monsters. They have no idea what's going on, but they're happy to have a party of bold adventurers guarding them. If the characters ask Tilda what to do, she suggests exploring the area to see how far the supernatural gloom extends and to protect the townsfolk from any other monsters. Grimbold, seeking help, eventually returns to the Old Owl.

Search for Nathaire and Remy

A quick check reveals that Nathaire and Remy are not in their rooms. Nathaire occupied the ground-floor room that has a desk. Remy stayed in the room just across from that one. (No one was staying in the third.) Ordinary clothing and gear remain behind, and their mounts are still in the stable (see Investigate the Darkness). It does not appear they packed up for a journey.

Investigate the Darkness

If the characters venture into the gloomy night outside the inn, they quickly discover a few unsettling facts.

Chill: A pervasive cold seeps into the bones, no matter how warmly dressed or close to a fire one is.

Dread: An oppressive sense of anxiety and hopelessness presses down on Duponde. It feels like the wisest course of action is to go back to the Old Owl and hide.

Gloom: It's a dark, cloudy night, and an eerie gloom has settled over Duponde. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius while Duponde is in the clutches of the Shadowfell. (Remember this whenever the characters are in the Shadowfell. It applies for the rest of the adventure.)

Twisted Reflection: This is not the same Duponde the characters arrived in hours ago. Streets don't seem to meet the same way; buildings stand subtly distorted and menacing.

Using Skills

Players might ask whether any of their characters' skills can help them to figure out what's going on. The skills most likely to be useful are Arcana, Nature, and Religion.

Arcana (DC 12): The gloom, chill, dread, and twisted appearance indicate that the Old Owl and its surroundings are now in the Shadowfell.

Arcana (DC 19): Areas of the mortal world can shift into the plane of shadow under the effect of powerful curses. This event is called a shadowfall. Sometimes such shifts are permanent, and sometimes they recur intermittently or end after a time.

No gain is to be had in trying to find how far the effect extends. Duponde is now in the Shadowfell, and anyone who leaves the town just travels into the wider plane of shadow and greater peril. The best chance to return to the world is to be in Duponde when it shifts back, either by waiting for it to happen on its own or by figuring out what caused the shadowfall.

Nature (DC 12): The Old Owl and its environs are no longer in the natural world.

Religion (DC 12): The gloom and dread suggest the Shadowfell is intruding into the world somehow. The Shadowfell is the plane through which the souls of the dead pass on their path beyond death. Dark magic and undead often draw on its power.

Explore the Town

Characters gain the same information they gain from investigating the darkness. In addition, they determine that Duponde's people are now awake and very alarmed. Most are locking themselves inside, unwilling to venture outdoors.

As the adventurers explore, they catch frequent glimpses of threatening shadows that quickly slip out of sight. They hear a variety of strange sounds—clatters, thumps, and muffled shouts of alarm—lost in the darkness.

Go to Evard's Tomb: If the characters head straight for the graveyard, they make it about halfway before Grimbold runs into them. Continue with Grimbold's Return.

Grimbold's Return

After the adventurers have had a chance to consider Duponde's predicament, they meet up with Grimbold again. If the characters are still in or around the Old Owl, Grimbold finds them there. Otherwise, the guard runs into them on the streets in the following manner:

A dim light appears in the gloom. Several armed men approach. The leader raises his lantern high, and in its light you recognize Grimbold with a couple of armed townspeople. "Ah, the travelers," he says. "I'm glad to see you. Some dark curse has fallen over Duponde. You look like you can handle some trouble. Can you help us?"

Grimbold asks what the characters have seen and listens carefully to any information they offer. If the characters ask about compensation, Grimbold looks a little disappointed. He says that the town has little financial compensation to offer, due to the expense of the bridge repairs. However, he concedes that Lady Celice Arnaud would surely award the party at least 250 gold pieces in exchange for uncovering and dealing with the source of the trouble.

If the adventurers ask how they can help, or when you're ready to move on, the marshal adds:

"There's trouble all over town. Monsters are roaming the streets, and people are terrified. Something is lurking in the armory, and our militia volunteers need to get in there to properly arm themselves. And, not ten minutes ago, I found poor Eddin, the guard at the north gate, bleeding at the side of the road. He told me that the halfling—the one who serves that young wizard who's been poking around Evard's Tomb—fled the town like he had a dozen demons on his heels. When Eddin tried to stop that little scoundrel, the halfling stabbed him. I think that halfling's got something to do with this, but we also need to get the armory open. The armory or the fugitive—which can you handle for me?"

Eddin is wounded but should live, if the characters ask about him. Grimbold looks favorably upon this small kindness.

Decision Time

The players have a decision to make: Do they pursue Remy to find out what he knows, or do they stay in town?

If the players decide to chase Remy, they gain the quest Catch Remy. Continue with the **Dark Woods** encounter. While the characters are out chasing the halfling, Grimbold finds enough guards to deal with the armory.

If the players instead stay in town, they gain the quest Protect Duponde. Go to **The Armory** encounter. Grimbold sends a couple guards after Remy, but they don't catch him.

Dark Woods

Encounter Level 1

Make sure you know what the characters are using for a light source.

Begin by reading:
You set out northward, following the road leading out of Duponde. A mile outside town, the road crosses a small stream on an old stone bridge. The woods are growing thicker, and you've left behind the farmhouses and fields surrounding Duponde.

Setup

1 umbral sprite swarm (U)
1 sporeback frog (S)
2 thornskin frogs (T)

When the characters reach the area, read:
Croaking echoes from the shadows around you, and then high-pitched voices, lots of them, giggling, singing, and squabbling. A dim, purple cloud darts and swirls in the shadows of the trees. Something big splashes in the water close by!

Tactics

The sprites are hovering near the carnivorous frogs, hoping that the amphibians waylay someone interesting.

Sporeback Frog: This amphibian hangs back by the pond, moving only close enough to use its *barbed tongue* attack. If it can, it pulls its target into the pond, where the frog has the advantage of its aquatic trait.

Sprite Swarm: This horde flies into the best position to use its *darkwave* attack against the most characters possible. The swarm cares little about the frogs, but it tries to avoid impeding the frogs' attacks. After using *darkwave*, the sprites skirt around the outer edges of the battle, attacking with swarm of fangs and blades. If the swarm is bloodied and the frogs are dead, the swarm flees. It might save *fade away* for its escape.

Thornskin Frogs: These frogs each move to attack the two nearest characters, using *pounce* to begin the fight. They use *tongue grab* against a target they have no other way to reach with *bite* or *pounce*, or against a target they can pull into the water.

Features of the Area

Illumination: It's dark. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

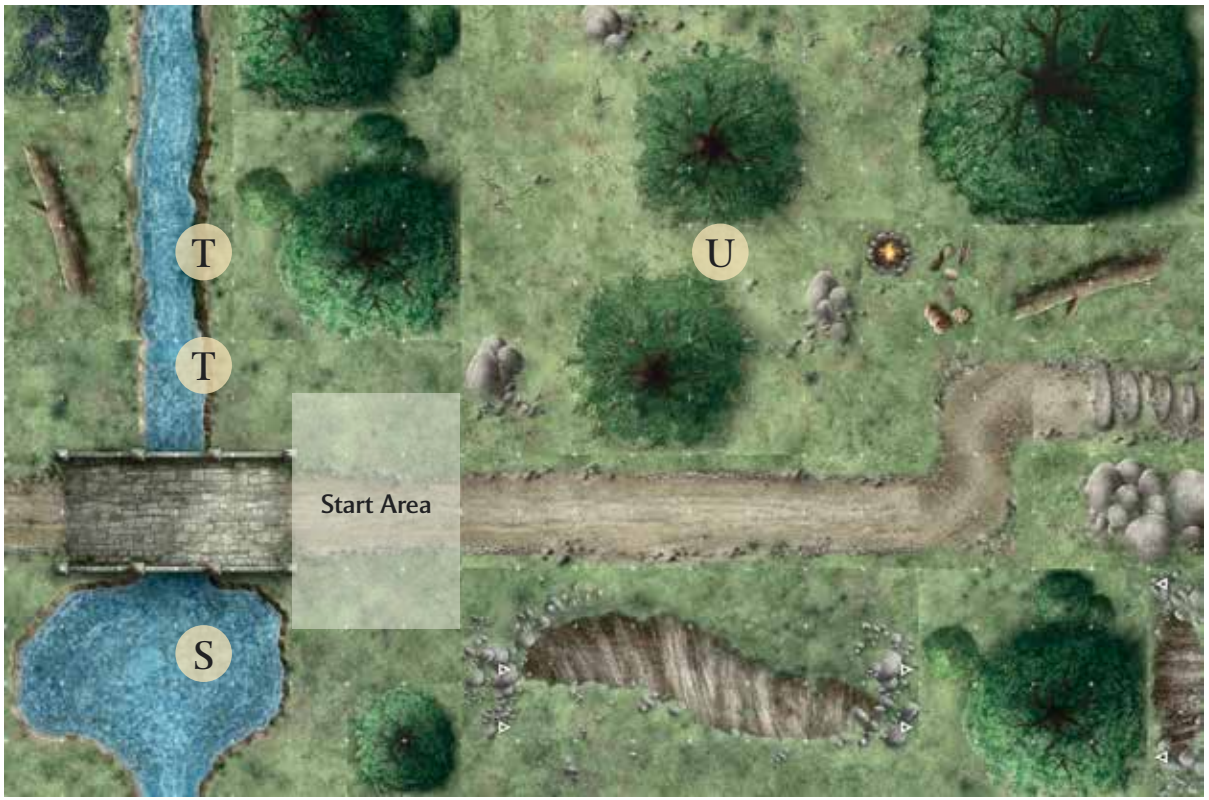
Boulders, Logs: These squares are difficult terrain.

Low Bluff: Creatures can descend the bluff as if it were difficult terrain. Climbing up the bluff requires a successful DC 8 Athletics check.

Pond: Water south of the bridge is deep. Creatures can move through these squares only by swimming. No check is required, but each square requires 2 extra squares of movement. Those in the pond gain partial cover against attacks from outside the water.

Stream: This water is difficult terrain.

Trees: A tree trunk's square constitutes difficult terrain. Climbing it requires a DC 8 Athletics check. The trees are about 20 feet tall.



Conclusion

Close to the bridge, characters find a tattered bedroll and an empty saddlebag. Small, muddy boot prints continue north on the road. Remy had a close scrape with the frogs when he passed through this area, and he lost some of his gear as he made his escape.

Reward

At the end of the session, each character gains 100 XP for battling the monsters.

2 Thornskin Frogs (T) **Level 1 Brute**
Medium natural beast (aquatic)

HP 35; **Bloodied** 17 **Initiative** +4
AC 13, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 11 **Perception** +2
Speed 4, swim 6 Low-light vision

Traits

Aquatic
The thornskin can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.

Pounce ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: The thornskin shifts its speed.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.

Minor Actions

Tongue Grab ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: The thornskin pulls the target up to 2 squares.

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+2)
Con 15 (+2) **Int** 3 (-4) **Cha** 9 (-1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Umbral Sprite Swarm (U) **Level 4 Controller**
Medium fey humanoid (swarm)

HP 55; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative** +6
AC 18, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15 **Perception** +8
Speed 4, fly 6 (hover) Blindsight 6

Traits

Swarm Attack ✦ Aura 1
An enemy that ends its turn within the aura takes 3 damage.

Swarm
The swarm can occupy the same space as another creature, and an enemy can enter its space, which is difficult terrain. The swarm cannot be pulled, pushed, or slid by melee or ranged attacks. It can squeeze through any opening that is large enough for at least one of the creatures it comprises.

Standard Actions

Swarm of Fangs and Blades ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.

Darkwave (necrotic, zone) **✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close burst 1 (one creature in the burst); +7 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 3 necrotic damage.
Effect: The burst creates a zone of darkness that lasts until the end of the swarm's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight.

Triggered Actions

Fade Away (necrotic) **✦ Encounter**
Trigger: The swarm takes damage
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The swarm becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack.

Skills Stealth +11
Str 8 (+1) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 13 (+3) **Cha** 15 (+4)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Elven

Sporeback Frog (S) **Level 2 Controller**
Medium natural beast (aquatic)

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 **Initiative** +4
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12 **Perception** +3
Speed 3, swim 5 Low-light vision

Traits

Aquatic
The sporeback can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the sporeback's next turn.

Barbed Tongue ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 2 damage, and the sporeback pulls the target 2 squares and knocks it prone.

Triggered Actions

Spore Release (poison) **✦ Encounter**
Trigger: The sporeback drops to 0 hit points.
Attack (No Action): Close burst 2 (creatures in burst); +5 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d6 + 7 poison damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

Str 15 (+3) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 18 (+5) **Int** 3 (-3) **Cha** 9 (+0)
Skills Stealth +9
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

The Armory

Encounter Level 1

When the characters enter the area, read:
Following Grimbold's directions, you move through the darkened streets to the armory. The gloom seems to be alive, shadows flowing around the dim glow of light sources. Finally, your group reaches the edge of the river, where an aqueduct runs through the town. You can barely make out the silhouette of a large, two-story stone building in the shadows.

Setup

2 spider swarms (S)
1 deathjump spider (D)
3 leeching shadows (L)

Do not place the monsters until the characters cross the bridge. The deathjump spider is hidden atop the roof at the start of the encounter. A character must succeed on a DC 18 Perception check to detect it. The leeching shadows are not visible. They emerge from the statues during their turn.

When the characters reach the opposite side of the bridge, read:
The door to the armory is ajar, and the body of one of Duponde's soldiers lies on the threshold. The body is covered in small bites. As you see this, the windows of the armory begin to undulate as hundreds of spiders begin pouring out.

Tactics

These monsters go after the nearest potential victim, even if that means abandoning good cover.

Deathjump Spider: This arachnid is hidden atop the roof, and it uses *death from above* as its opening attack. Once bloodied, it scuttles away into the shadows to set up for another attack at a different target.

Leeching Shadows: These creatures remain hidden, waiting for the characters to engage other monsters. When the party's attention is focused on the spiders, the leeching shadows creep out to attack characters who are hanging back.

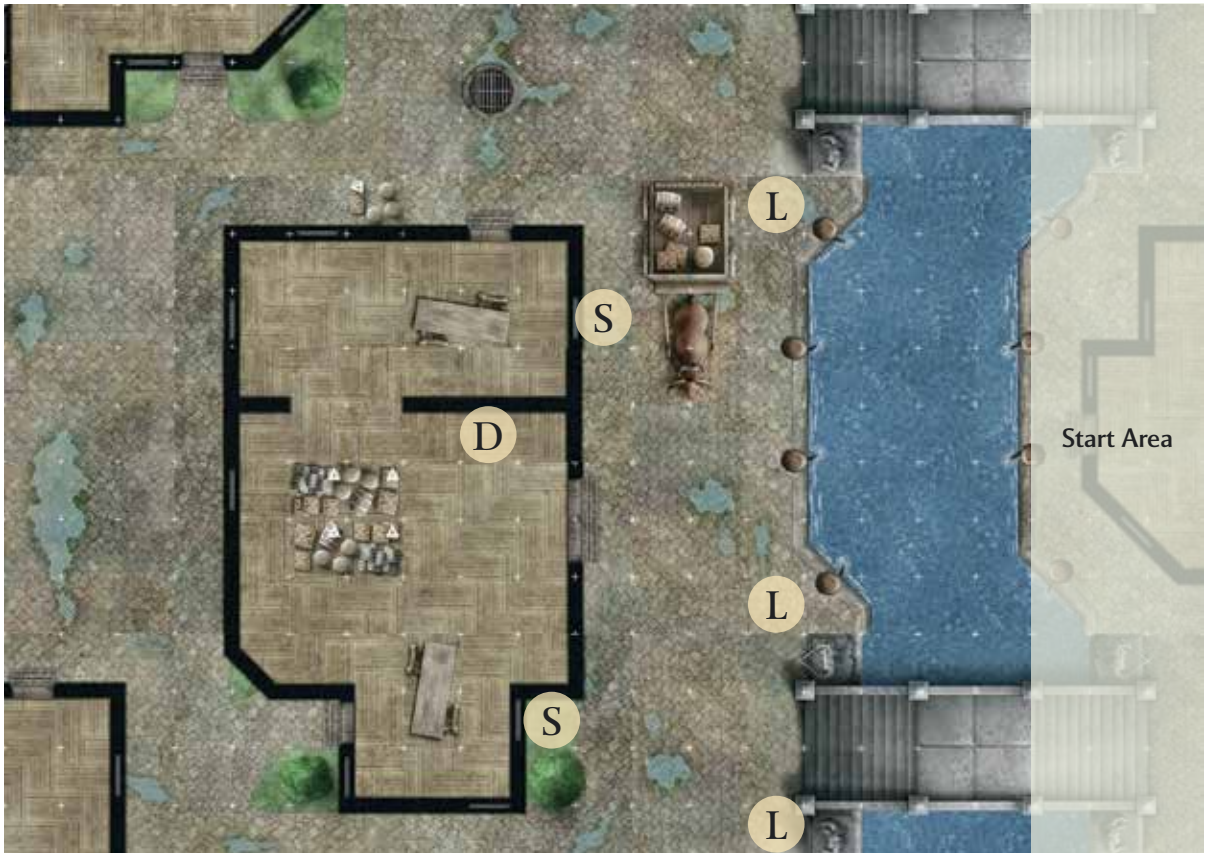
Spider Swarms: When combat begins, these swarms rush through tiny openings in the armory walls and burst out onto the street to menace as many enemies as possible

Features of the Area

Illumination: It's dark. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

Aqueduct: The water is 5 feet below the level of the street, and it is 10 feet deep. No check is required to swim, but each square requires 2 extra squares of movement. Creatures in the water must use a move action and succeed on a DC 12 Athletics check to climb from the water up to the street.

Bridges: The highest level of each arched bridge is 10 feet above the water of the aqueduct.



Cart: The bed of the cart is 3 feet above the street. Moving into the cart requires 1 extra square of movement.

Doors: The doors leading into the armory (the central building) are unlocked. Other doors are locked. It requires a DC 12 Thievery check to pick a lock or a DC 19 Athletics to force open a door.

Furniture and Goods: These squares are difficult terrain.

Roof: The roof of the armory is 20 feet high, and unlike the surrounding buildings, it is flat.

Stairway: These stairs are difficult terrain. They lead to the armory's upper floor (currently empty).

Statues: The statues at the foot of each bridge are blocking terrain.

Tables: These squares are difficult terrain.

Windows: The armory windows are 5 feet above the street outside. Bars cover each window, which is about 1 foot wide and 4 feet tall.

Conclusion

The armory contains twenty suits of leather armor, twenty light shields, twenty crossbows, twenty spears, twenty clubs, and countless crossbow bolts. After the characters defeat the monsters infesting the armory, a handful of Duponde's militia begins to arrive. The guards thank the characters for the help and begin to arm up, but they report that more monsters have been seen roaming the town. Grimbold is leading other guards on a sweep of the streets. However, the danger is far from over.

Deathjump Spider (D) **Level 4 Skirmisher**
Medium natural beast (spider)

HP 52; **Bloodied** 26 **Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +7
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb) Tremorsense 5
Resist 5 poison

Traits

Web Walk
The spider ignores difficult terrain composed of webs.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

⸸ **Death from Above** ✦ **Recharge** ⚅ ⚄ ⚃
Effect: The spider jumps up to 6 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks. After the jump, the spider uses *bite*, knocking the target prone on a hit.

Move Actions

Prodigious Leap ✦ **Encounter**
Effect: The spider jumps up to 10 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +8
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 8 (-1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

3 Leeching Shadows (L) **Level 1 Minion Lurker**
Small shadow humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +7
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover)

Traits

Born of Shadows
The shadow can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has partial concealment instead of needing total concealment.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shadow Meld** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4 necrotic damage, and the shadow shifts into the target's space and melds with its shadow (save ends). While melded, the shadow is removed from play, and the target grants combat advantage and takes ongoing 4 necrotic damage. If the target saves, the shadow reappears in a square adjacent to the target of the shadow's choice.

Skills Stealth +8
Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+1)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 5 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common

Reward

At the end of the session, each character gains 100 XP for battling the monsters.

2 Spider Swarms (S) **Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural beast (spider, swarm)

HP 44; **Bloodied** 22 **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +3
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb) Tremorsense 5
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 5 to close and area attacks

Traits

☼ **Swarm Attack** ✦ **Aura** 1
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura is slowed until the start of its next turn.

Swarm
The swarm can occupy the same space as another creature, and an enemy can enter its space, which is difficult terrain. The swarm cannot be pulled, pushed, or slid by melee or ranged attacks. It can squeeze through any opening that is large enough for at least one of the creatures it comprises.

Web Walk
The spider ignores difficult terrain composed of webs.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Swarm of Fangs** (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Skills Athletics +6, Stealth +9
Str 11 (+1) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 1 (-4) **Cha** 7 (-1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Session 3: Dark Dreams

In Session 2, the characters had two choices: Pursue Nathaire's servant Remy and catch him before he escapes, or battle the shadow-monsters roaming the streets of Duponde. During this session, the characters continue on the path they selected last time. If the characters are on Remy's trail, begin this session with Remy's Trail. Those who chose to drive the monsters out of the town armory begin this session with Streets of Duponde.

Remy's Trail

Although he might appear to be nothing more than Nathaire's valet, Remy is a talented henchman and assistant, handy with a knife and a bit of poison. During the events of Session 1, he accompanied Nathaire to Evard's Tomb and helped perform the ritual to drain the power from Evard's remains. However, the ritual went awry. The ghost of Vontarin, the wizard who is buried in Evard's Tomb, possessed Nathaire. Nathaire then killed the hired laborers who helped him to open the tomb, and that was all Remy needed to see. The halfling fled into the night, thinking of nothing but escaping from his master and the town of Duponde as quickly as possible.

Remy has friends in the area—a gang of brigands loyal to Nathaire. They guarded the wizard during the journey to Duponde and camped just outside town in case Nathaire needed a little extra muscle. The halfling intends to collect some supplies at the camp and head out at once for safer parts. It's up to the characters to catch him before he makes his escape.

Skill Challenge: Tracking Remy

This challenge begins when the characters set out from the site of their battle against the frogs. There, characters found Remy's prints near a small bridge in the woods outside town, as well as discarded gear. The party needs to run down the halfling before he gets away.

Level: 1

Complexity: 1 (4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Endurance, Perception, Nature, Stealth

Endurance (DC 8; group check): The characters press on together at their best speed, trying to overtake the fugitive. Each character makes an Endurance check. The party gains one success if at least half the checks are successful.

Nature (DC 12): The character helps maintain bearings along the path.

Perception (DC 12): The character follows Remy's muddy trail in the forest.

Stealth (DC 12; group check): The party keeps noise to a minimum to listen better and avoid alerting foes. Each character makes a Stealth check. The party gains one success if at least half the checks are successful.

Success: Characters discover the encampment of Remy's bandit allies without being spotted. The party can quickly conceal its light sources to avoid alerting the bandits. Go to the **Nowhere to Run** encounter. The adventurers can attack the camp, surprising foes as long as they use no lights.

Failure: The characters are too slow. Remy directs the bandits to set an ambush for pursuers, and then

he escapes before the party arrives on the scene. Go to the **Nowhere to Run** encounter. Enemies gain surprise against the characters, and Remy is not present.

Streets of Duponde

Clearing out the armory is an excellent first step to helping the folk of Duponde make it through the night, but dangerous creatures still roam the streets. Worse yet, panic and despair have descended over the town.

The most dangerous threat remaining at large in Duponde is a small pack of dusk beasts, predatory creatures native to the Shadowfell. These predators see Duponde's sudden appearance in their domain as a potential feast of helpless, terrified people. The pack roams the streets, its members trying doors and sniffing at windows in the hopes of finding easy prey.

Other monsters are present, as well. Small animate shadows have sprung up all over town, and they are stalking and tormenting Duponde's people. A few dark ones were in the vicinity when Duponde appeared in their bleak domain. Their scouts and spies are already studying the lay of the land, plotting mischief. A few have joined Vontarin.

USING THE DESPAIR DECK

If you are using the Despair Deck from *The Shadowfell: Gloomwrought and Beyond*™, players might have to draw cards during the skill challenge. Whenever any character fails a check as part of the skill challenge for the first time, that character's player must draw a card to determine what effect takes hold. Use the narrative to reinforce the card a player draws. For example, if a character fails a Perception check to find Remy and the player draws the Craven card, you might say that the character gets spooked by shadows flitting about in the woods. At the end of the session, ask the players to return the cards and record any despair effects still affecting their characters.

Skill Challenge: Searching Duponde

The skill challenge begins when the characters set out from the town armory to protect Duponde from any other monsters that might be roaming the streets. They can hear bedlam breaking loose in the darkened town. More monsters are at large in Duponde, menacing the townspeople, and someone needs to search for the creatures, help those in need, and spread word to stay inside with doors barred and windows shuttered.

Level: 1

Complexity: 2 (6 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Arcana, Bluff, Diplomacy, Endurance, Perception, Streetwise

Arcana (DC 19): The character makes educated guesses where shadow monsters are likely to lurk.

Streetwise (DC 19): The character anticipates the movements of any enemies that are trying to avoid detection by hiding in alleyways and abandoned houses.

Arcana (DC 12): The character uses his or her knowledge of the Shadowfell to identify that one of the groups of monsters consists of dusk beasts, creatures of the Shadowfell that feed on shadows for sustenance.

Bluff (DC 12): The character feigns cries for help, trying to draw in monsters lingering nearby. Alternatively, the characters can mimic a large, aggressive group of hunters, trying to drive monsters into a dead end.

Diplomacy (DC 12): The character calms panicked townspeople and quickly gains reliable information on monster sightings.

Endurance (DC 12; group check): The characters try to cover a lot of ground quickly. Each character makes an Endurance check. The party gains one success if at least half the checks are successful.

Perception (DC 12): The character listens for distant calls for help or signs of prowling monsters, identifying the direction the party needs to go.

Success: Characters complete a sweep of the town, alerting the townspeople to the danger and locating the dusk beast pack roaming the streets. Go to the **Streets of Shadow** encounter. Each character gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls during the encounter.

Failure: The characters become disoriented in the darkness and stumble unprepared into the dusk beasts. Go to the **Streets of Shadow** encounter. The characters are surprised at the start of the encounter.

TALKING TO REMY

If the characters catch Remy at the bandit camp, the halfling is willing to talk if the characters make it clear they just want to ask a few questions. When asked what he knows about Nathaire or the cause of the shadowfall, Remy reveals that he accompanied Nathaire to Evard's Tomb. There, the wizard performed a ritual. Something went wrong, and a dark presence "went into" Nathaire. The tomb walls gave off a pulse of energy that, as Remy puts it, "changed the night." Nathaire went mad, and he killed the hired laborers and tried to slay Remy. At that point, Remy fled in terror.

The Dark Woods encounter might still become a fight, since Remy absolutely refuses to return to Duponde. If he suspects that the characters intend to take him in, he orders the bandits to attack.

Nowhere to Run

Encounter Level 2

Skill Challenge Success

If the characters succeeded on the skill challenge, they spot Remy and his companions before the villains have a chance to douse their fire. Read:

A short distance ahead is the dim, flickering light of a campfire in the woods by the side of the road. Several coarse humans and goblins are gathered around the fire. In the middle of the group is a halfling, shoving gear into a backpack and issuing instructions to the others in an urgent voice. No one seems to have noticed you yet.

Skill Challenge Failure

Characters who fail in the skill challenge blunder into a surprise attack. Remy is already gone and should be replaced—add one more common bandit and one more goblin sniper to the encounter. The bandits are under orders to waylay anyone who seems to be following Remy. Read:

The road passes through dark thickets and steep, rocky escarpments. Your chase has yet to bear results, but suddenly you hear battle cries and the sharp report of arrows loosed into the darkness. It's an ambush!

Setup

3 common bandits (B)
4 goblin snipers (G)
Remy, Nathaire's Henchman (R), or 1 additional bandit and sniper

Place monsters and the characters as you describe the scene according to the skill challenge results. Those who start this encounter with lights are at a disadvantage, since enemies in squares of total darkness can still see into an illuminated area and initiate an attack without being seen.

Tactics

If Remy is absent or dead, his allies break off and flee when only three or fewer of them remain.

Bandits: If the bandits are surprised, the first one able to do so without risking attack douses the campfire (a standard action from an adjacent square). The bandits otherwise close to melee, using *dazing strike* and flanking to gain combat advantage.

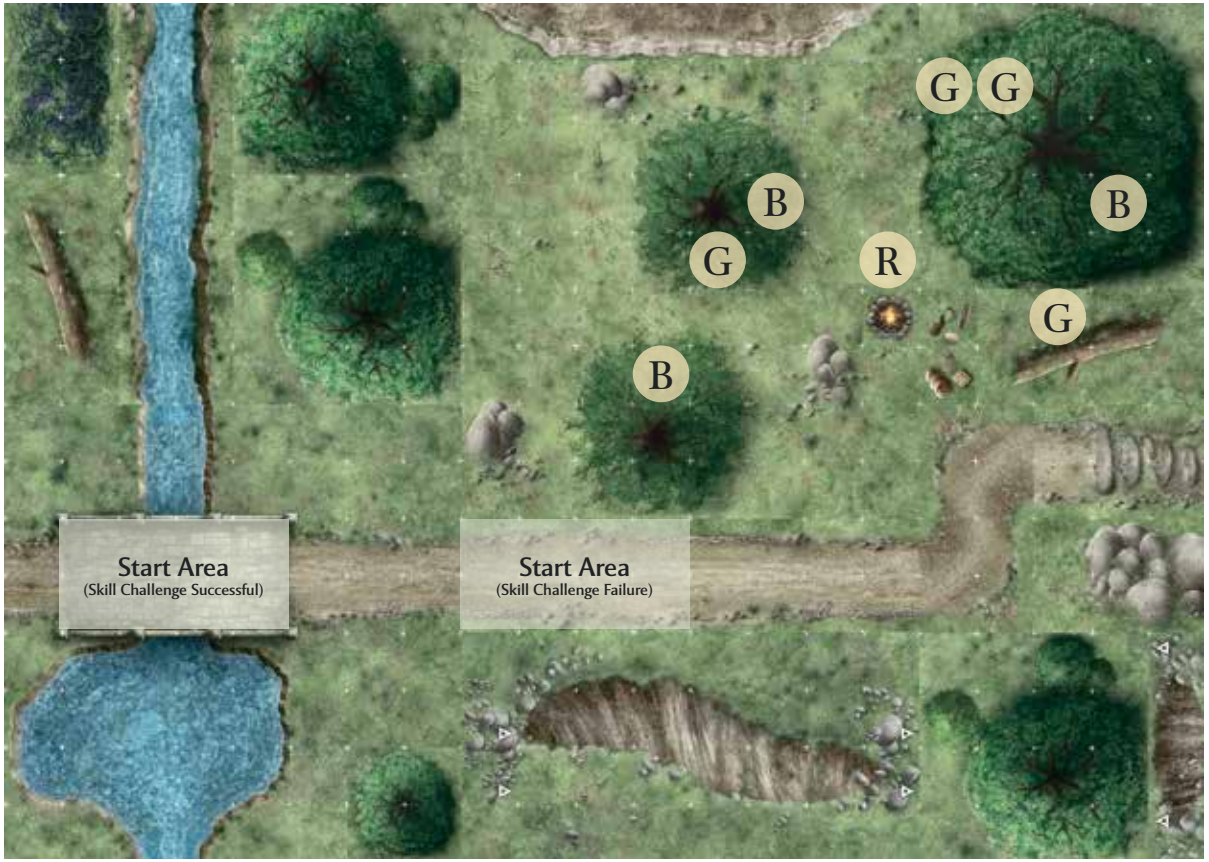
Remy: He uses *distracting cloak* each round, moving from foe to foe to keep combat advantage. He uses *desperate gambit* only if he has combat advantage against the target. Remy avoids fighting defenders.

Features of the Area

Illumination: If the campfire is burning, it provides bright light within a 5-square radius. It's dark if the campfire is out.

Other light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

Boulders and Logs: These squares are difficult terrain.



Low Bluff: Creatures can descend the bluff as if it were difficult terrain. Climbing up the bluff requires a successful DC 8 Athletics check.

Pond: Water south of the bridge is deep. Creatures can move through these squares only by swimming. No check is required, but each square requires 2 extra squares of movement. Those in the pond gain partial cover against attacks from outside the water.

Stream: This water is difficult terrain.

Trees: A tree trunk's square is difficult terrain. The trees are about 20 feet tall.

Remy, Henchman (R) **Level 3 Skirmisher**
Small natural humanoid, halfling

HP 45; **Bloodied** 22 **Initiative** +7
AC 17, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +5
Speed 6
Saving Throws +5 against fear effects

Standard Actions
⊕ **Dagger** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, or 3d6 + 4 damage if Remy has combat advantage against the target.
⸸ **Desperate Gambit** ✦ **Encounter**
Requirement: Remy must be bloodied.
Effect: Remy uses *dagger*. If the attack hits, the target takes 2d6 extra damage. If the attack misses, Remy takes 1d6 damage.

Move Actions
Distracting Cloak ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Remy shifts up to 3 squares and gains partial concealment until the end of his turn.

Triggered Actions
Second Chance ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An enemy hits Remy with an attack.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The triggering enemy must reroll the attack roll and use the new result.

Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +8, Thievery +10
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 9 (+0)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 13 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+3)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, dagger, cloak

Conclusion

If the characters defeat the bandits, with or without Remy, they discover a mysterious journal bound in black leather near the fire. Remy discarded it to make room for provisions in his pack. The journal is written in a code of Nathaire's devising, and it will take time to decipher. See Session 5 for more information on the journal's contents.

Reward

Each character gains 150 XP for facing the skill challenge and battling the monsters.

Successfully questioning or defeating Remy in this encounter completes the Catch Remy quest; each character receives an additional 300 XP for that.

4 Goblin Snipers (G) **Level 1 Minion Artillery**
Small natural humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3
AC 13, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits
Sniper
If the goblin misses with a ranged attack while hidden, it remains hidden.

Standard Actions
⊕ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 4 damage.
⊰ **Shortbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 4 damage.

Triggered Actions
Goblin Tactics ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: The goblin is missed by a melee attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The goblin shifts 1 square.

Skills Stealth +8, Thievery +8
Str 13 (+1) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+1)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 8 (-1) **Cha** 8 (-1)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Equipment leather armor, short sword, shortbow, 20 arrows

If the characters talk to Remy and don't fight his bandit allies, award the characters full XP for the encounter. The objective was to find out what Remy knows, and talking accomplishes that.

Treasure: The characters can also take the bandits' gear, which includes 400 sp, 60 gp, a fine opal (100 gp), and a *+1 amulet of protection*.

3 Common Bandits (B) **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human

HP 37; **Bloodied** 18 **Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 6

Traits
Combat Advantage
The bandit deals 1d6 extra damage against any creature granting combat advantage to it.

Standard Actions
⊕ **Mace** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the bandit can shift 1 square.
⊰ **Dagger** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and the bandit can shift 1 square.
⸸ **Dazing Strike** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when the attack misses
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the bandit's next turn.
Effect: The bandit can shift 1 square.

Skills Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, mace, 4 dagger

Streets of Shadow

Encounter Level 2

Setup

3 dusk beasts (D)
2 leeching shadows (L)
1 shadow bolter (B)

Do not place the shadow bolter or the shadows during setup. The characters can't see the dark one from their starting position, and the shadows are not visible. They emerge from the shadows of the buildings during their turns.

When you're ready to begin, read:
As you make your way toward the center of town, the gloom hanging over Duponde makes the streets a hazy maze. Turning a corner, you spot three creatures prowling from door to door. Made of solid shadows, they resemble predatory drakes. Each has a long barbed tail and two distinct heads, each one's maw full of fangs. With menacing hisses, the beast-shadows turn to confront you.

When the leeching shadows join, add:
From beneath nearby eaves, small, animate shadows abruptly emerge and flow toward you. They look like the shades of hunched children.

When the shadow bolter attacks, add:
A small, cloaked humanoid lurks in the alleyway between two houses. Its feet are cloven hooves, and it wears dark leather armor. The creature wields a crossbow, which begins to gather dark energy as it prepares to strike.

Tactics

Shadow Bolter: This creature hangs back, sniping with *black bolt* at any character who appears to be in trouble. He attacks those who are already flanked to gain the most out of *deadly precision*. The bolter flees if the other monsters are defeated.

Dusk Beasts: Sensing fresh prey, the dusk beasts charge the nearest characters and attack. They eventually split up and go after different characters, since each beast wants its own kill. Each beast tries to push targets into solid objects to knock its prey prone and employ *two-maw rend*.

Leeching Shadows: These creatures steal into the fight cautiously, attacking characters isolated from their companions.

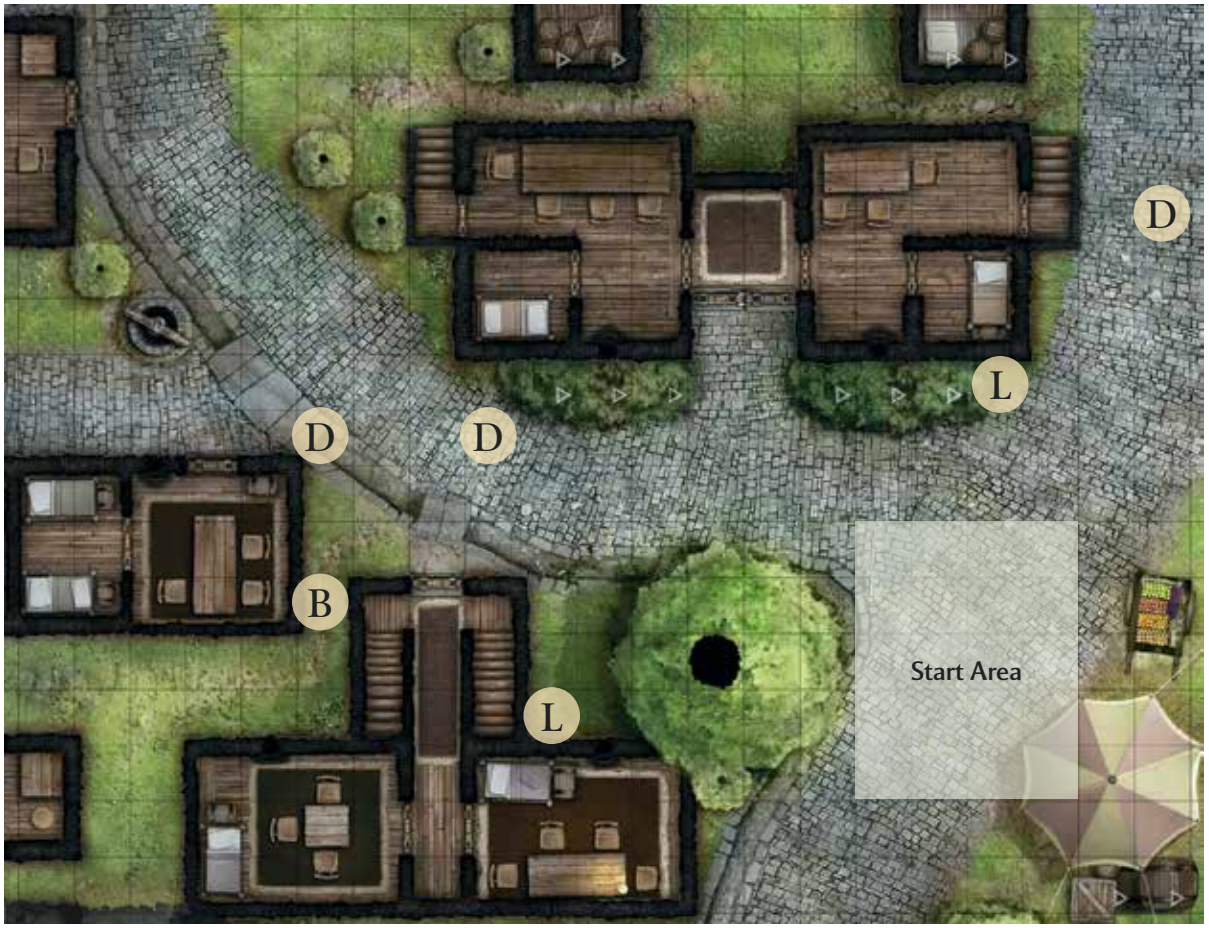
Features of the Area

Illumination: It's dark. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

Bushes and Hedges: These plants are difficult terrain, and their squares are lightly obscured.

Cart: The bed of the cart is 3 feet above the street. Moving into the cart requires 1 extra square of movement.

Doors: Exterior doors are closed and locked. It requires a DC 12 Thievery check to pick a lock or a



DC 19 Athletics to force open a door. Interior doors are open.

Furniture and Goods: These squares are difficult terrain.

Large Tree: The tree trunk's square is blocking terrain. Climbing it requires a DC 8 Athletics check. This tree is about 40 feet tall.

Pavilion: This shelter is open underneath, so it doesn't hinder movement.

Stairways: These stairs are difficult terrain.

Well: This water source is 3 feet high. The water is 20 feet below the edge. It takes a DC 19 Athletics to climb out. Due to the well's height and the bucket framework, a creature pushed, pulled, or slid into the well's square gains a +5 bonus to the saving throw to avoid falling in.

2 Leeching Shadows (L) **Level 1 Minion Lurker**
Small shadow humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +7
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover)

Traits

Born of Shadows
The shadow can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has partial concealment instead of needing total concealment.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shadow Meld** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4 necrotic damage, and the shadow shifts into the target's space and melds with its shadow (save ends). While so melded, the shadow is removed from play, and the target grants combat advantage and takes ongoing 4 necrotic damage. If the target saves, the shadow reappears in a square adjacent to its choice of target.

Skills Stealth +8
Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+1)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 5 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common

Conclusion

A quick check of the houses in this area reveals the townsfolk are unharmed. After thanking the characters for their help, the citizens hide behind locked doors again.

Reward

At the end of the session, each character gains 450 XP for facing the skill challenge, battling the monsters, and completing the Protect Duponde quest.

Treasure: In a pouch at its belt, the dark one carries 100 gp and an emerald (100 gp). It wears a *+1 amulet of protection*.

3 Dusk Beasts (D) **Level 2 Brute**
Medium shadow magical beast

HP 44; **Bloodied** 22 **Initiative** +3
AC 14, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14 **Perception** +3
Speed 6

Traits

Two-Headed Guard
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the dusk beast. While dazed, the dusk beast can take opportunity actions and immediate actions.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and the dusk beast can push the target 1 square. If the dusk beast can't push the target, the dusk beast knocks the target prone instead.

Two-Maw Rend ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one prone creature); +5 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 4 damage.

Triggered Actions

Barbed Tail ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Trigger: An enemy enters a square adjacent to the dusk beast.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 2 (the triggering enemy); +5 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, and the dusk beast knocks the target prone.

Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Shadow Bolter (B) **Level 5 Artillery**
Small shadow humanoid, dark one

HP 50; **Bloodied** 25 **Initiative** +6
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +9
Speed 6 Darkvision

Traits

Combat Advantage (necrotic)
Whenever the shadow bolter hits a creature granting combat advantage to it, the bolter deals 5 extra necrotic damage, and each of that creature's adjacent allies takes 5 necrotic damage.

Deadly Precision
The shadow bolter's ranged attacks have combat advantage against any enemy that the bolter's allies are flanking.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Dagger** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage.

Black Bolt (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes 5 damage each time it provokes an opportunity attack (save ends).

Move Actions

Dark Step ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The bolter moves 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks provoked by this movement, and gains combat advantage against each creature that it ends its move adjacent to until the end of the bolter's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Killing Dark
Trigger: The bolter drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): Each enemy adjacent to the bolter is blinded until the end of his or her next turn.

Skills Stealth +11
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment dagger, crossbow, 20 bolt

Session 4: Evard's Tomb

Up to this point, the characters have been dealing with immediate threats and challenges of the shadowfall—the appearance of dangerous monsters in town or the escape of Nathaire's servant. Now it's time for the adventurers to seek some answers. If the characters spent the last session pursuing Remy, begin this session with Returning to Duponde. Characters who spent the last session hunting down the monsters in town start this session with Chapel of Peace.

Returning to Duponde

When the characters return to Duponde, they find Grimbold anxious to speak with them and find out what they've learned. Begin by reading:

After dealing with the thugs outside town, you turn around and retrace your steps, returning a couple of hours after you set out. When you reach the town, you find a group of four guards watching the gate. They send for the marshal, Grimbold, who soon arrives. Grimbold and the guards with him look like they've seen plenty of fighting in your absence.

"You're back!" the marshal says. "What news? Did you find the halfling?"

Encourage the players to recount highlights of the last two sessions as their characters saw them. The marshal interrupts to ask questions about exact numbers of opponents or to clarify details. He wants to know if anything in the woods poses a threat to the town. If Remy escaped, Grimbold is disappointed, but he thanks the party members for trying, especially in light of their encounters with monsters and bandits.

Grimbold explains what has happened in the town while the characters have been gone. He has managed to round up guards and arm them to stem off the worst of the monster attacks—black spiders at the armory, roaming shadow beasts in the streets, and packs of giant rats by the warehouses. Creatures have broken into homes or attacked foolhardy souls who ventured out. Several townsfolk are injured or dead.

Grimbold encourages the characters to keep helping out. If they ask what they can do next, he tells them that he's worried about the graveyard. Go on by reading:

"If you're still willing to help, my guards tell me that people who live near the cemetery say they saw and heard strange goings on there just before this started—a voice chanting in some dark language, shadowy figures skulking around the mausoleums, ghost lights dancing beneath the trees. Then the night turned to what's around us now. I don't have any guards to spare, not with the trouble in the streets. If you'd look into the graveyard, I'd be in your debt."

Continue to the **Pillaged Tomb** encounter when the player characters go to the graveyard.

Chapel of Peace

If the characters protected Duponde by clearing out the armory and scouring the streets of shadow monsters, they quickly become heroes to the townsfolk. Start by reading:

Soon after your battle against the pack of beasts roaming the streets, a pair of town guards finds you and informs you that Brother Zelan at the Chapel of Peace is asking for you. They lead you to the western end of town and a small temple that has a crumbling bell tower. The shrine is serving as a makeshift stronghold. A number of townspeople huddle inside, and six warriors guard the doors and watch the street.

A short, thick-waisted old priest tends to the people, but when he sees you enter, he draws you aside. "I am Brother Zelan, and I run this chapel," he says. "Grimbold's men tell me that you're slayers of shadows. I think I might have something to aid you."

Brother Zelan is a stubborn, aggressive old man who says that he'd be out hunting monsters with mace and holy symbol himself if he didn't have to look after the people seeking shelter in the chapel. It's mostly bluster. Beneath his loud talk he's wise enough to know that the dangers threatening Duponde are more than he can deal with. He asks the characters about what they've seen and done so far this night, interrupting with remarks such as "Serves them right!" or "That foul creature had it coming!"

When he's heard the tales, Brother Zelan provides the party with some news of his own.

"All this trouble started in the graveyard just down the hill. Just before the shadows came, I heard dark voices chanting in the distance. I came out on the steps to look, and I could see ghost lights dancing around the trees and dark figures skulking about the tombs. I think I saw that wizard fellow whose been staying at the Old Owl.

I started toward the villains, but before I could confront them, I heard a terrible cry. A wave of dark power swept out from the cemetery and changed the night to . . . this.

"Enough talk, though. I have a gift to aid you. When I was a young acolyte here, fifty years past, the wizard Vontarin came to the chapel and put this in our keeping just before he disappeared. He said that this was a potent talisman against the power of shadow, and that if shadows every threatened Duponde, it could be of service. Maybe you can go to the graveyard and put it to use?"

Brother Zelan then gives the characters a golden holy symbol containing a red gem. This symbol, which he calls the symbol of dawn, is nonmagical, but it has a special effect when the characters confront Vontarin in Session 12.

Brother Zelan urges them to hurry to the cemetery and investigate what happened there. When the characters are ready to venture into the graveyard, continue to the **Pillaged Tomb** encounter.

Daybreak

At the conclusion of this session, Duponde's long, dreadful night comes to an end. Dawn arrives, and as the sun comes up, the town shifts from the Shadowfell back to the normal world.

Leaving the dank shadows of the mausoleum, you find the graveyard is quiet. No more undead or shadow monsters lurk nearby, but you have found no sign of the missing wizard. The first rays of dawn glow dimly in the east.

Suddenly, the same dizzying jolt you felt hours ago at the Old Owl Inn spins your head and innards. The world becomes brighter, colors return, and the oppressive dread you've felt all night fades away. Duponde seems to be returning to the normal world, but how long it will stay there is anyone's guess.

After this session, characters can take an extended rest, sleeping through the day and replenishing expended resources.

Pillaged Tomb

Encounter Level 3

Setup

2 ghoul flesh seekers (G)
3 grasping zombies (Z)
4 leeching shadows (L)

Before you set up, have the players make a DC 18 group Perception check. If at least half the characters succeed, they spot the leeching shadows at the same time that they see the zombies. If at least half the characters achieve a result of 21 or higher, they also spot the ghouls. Any creatures the characters fail to see begin the battle hidden. Do not place hidden monsters on the map until they attack.

When the characters arrive, read:
Duponde's cemetery is filled with mossy old tombstones leaning at odd angles, gnarled, leafless trees, and crooked cobbled paths littered with cracked stones and wiry tufts of grass. The unnatural gloom hanging over the town is especially dense here—palpable fear lingers in the air. Ahead is a stone mausoleum, its roof decorated with small, leering gargoyles. But between you and the tomb, several clumsy figures dressed in dirt-stained garb shamble through the shadows. They look freshly slain.

Tactics

Ghoul Flesh Seekers: If the ghouls are hidden at the start of the battle, they wait for characters to come close enough for the ghouls to reach in a single move, opening the fight with *prepare for sacrifice*. If they aren't hidden, they begin combat by closing in and moving to a place where they can make Stealth checks to become hidden, so that they can use *prepare for sacrifice* on the following round.

Grasping Zombies: These corpses shamble toward the nearest living creature and attack. Each one uses *zombie grasp* on a target, and then uses *slam*

against the grabbed target. They fight with little intelligence, ignoring potential flanking situations.

Leeching Shadows: These creatures wait for the party to engage the zombies and then mount a sudden rush when the characters are occupied. They use the zombies as flanking partners.

Features of the Area

Illumination: It's dark. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

Benches: These squares are difficult terrain.

Bushes and Hedges: These plants are difficult terrain, and their squares are lightly obscured.

Mausoleum: This tomb's iron door is open, and the building has no windows. The roof is about 10 feet above the ground at the edge. It requires a DC 19 Athletics check to climb the wall.

Open Grave: Creatures that fall in this shallow grave take 1d6 damage. Scrambling out of the grave requires 2 extra squares of movement.

Ponds: The water of the pond is difficult terrain.

Statues: The pedestals are 5 feet tall, and they're blocking terrain. A creature can climb to the top of one with a successful DC 8 Athletics check.

Tombstones: A square containing a monument is difficult terrain.

Trees: A tree trunk's square is difficult terrain. Climbing it requires a DC 8 Athletics check. The trees are about 20 feet tall.

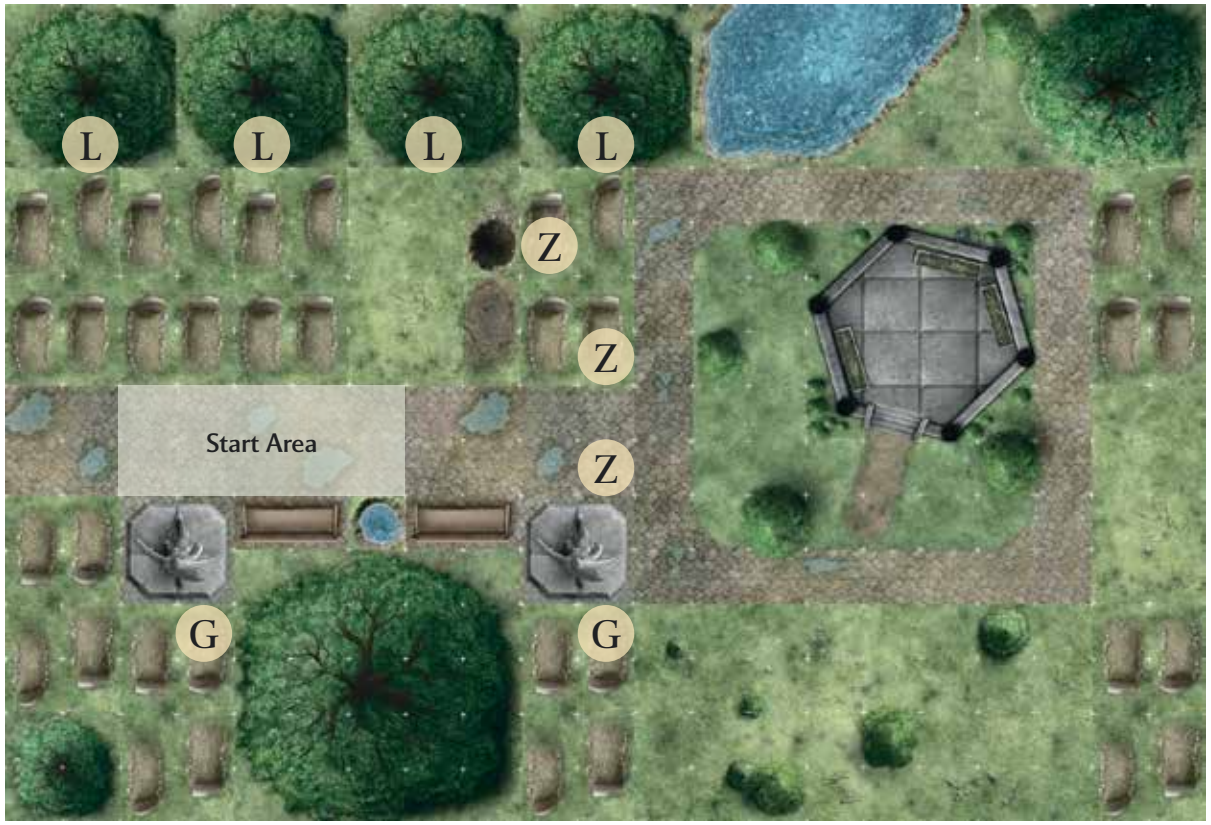
Conclusion

With the undead haunting the graveyard defeated, the characters can examine Evard's Tomb. Someone used crowbars, now discarded on the path, to pry open the mausoleum door. The three laborers who helped Nathaire open the tomb were transformed into the zombies in this encounter.

Searching the Tomb: Inside, the tomb contains a large sarcophagus, which has also been forced open. Inside is a black-boned skeleton clad in tattered robes. These bones, which the characters and townsfolk believe to be Evard's, are the mortal remains of Vontarin. The bones are well preserved despite being blackened. They look undisturbed, as though whoever opened the sarcophagus stopped as soon as the seal was broken. A character who succeeds on a DC 19 Arcana check can tell that some kind of magic trap has been triggered here recently.

Nathaire's Journal: If the characters did not find Nathaire's journal in the Nowhere to Run encounter in Session 3, they can find it here. The journal is a book bound in black leather, lying near the base of the sarcophagus. The journal is written in a code of Nathaire's devising, and it will take time to decipher. See Session 5 for more information on the journal's contents.

Daybreak: When the characters have had a chance to examine the scene, return to Daybreak.



Reward

For fighting the monsters, interacting with Grimbold or Zelan, and helping investigate the graveyard, each character gains 200 XP. If a player has played in every session so far, his or her character should have 1,000 XP if the character completed the quest in Session 3. That character now advances to level 2.

4 Leeching Shadows (L) **Level 1 Minion Lurker**
Small shadow humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +7
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover)

Traits

Born of Shadows
The shadow can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has partial concealment instead of needing total concealment.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shadow Meld** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4 necrotic damage, and the shadow shifts into the target's space and melds with its shadow (save ends). While so melded, the shadow is removed from play, and the target grants combat advantage and takes ongoing 4 necrotic damage. When the target saves, the shadow reappears in a square adjacent to its target of choice.

Skills Stealth +8
Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+1)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 5 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common

2 Ghoul Flesh Seekers (G) **Level 4 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)

HP 45; **Bloodied** 22 **Initiative** +10
AC 18, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +9
Speed 8 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

Shadow Skulk
The ghoul flesh seeker can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has cover or concealment instead of needing superior cover or total concealment.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

⸸ **Prepare for Sacrifice** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature the flesh seeker was hidden from at the start of the flesh seeker's turn); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and the flesh seeker knocks the target prone and grabs it. The target takes a -2 penalty to attempts to escape the grab and cannot stand up until the grab ends.

⸸ **Render unto Orcus** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one prone creature grabbed by the flesh seeker); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 9 damage.

Skills Acrobatics +11, Stealth +11
Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+2)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Equipment dagger

3 Grasping Zombies (Z) **Level 1 Brute**
Medium natural animate (undead)

HP 33; **Bloodied** 16 **Initiative** -1
AC 13, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11 **Perception** -1
Speed 4 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison

Traits

Zombie Weakness
A critical hit automatically reduces the zombie to 0 hit points.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Slam** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d12 + 3 damage, or 1d12 + 8 against a grabbed target.

⸸ **Zombie Grasp** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: The zombie grabs the target (escape DC 12) if it does not have a creature grabbed.

Triggered Actions

Deathless Hunger ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The zombie is reduced to 0 hit points, but not by a critical hit.
Effect (No Action): Roll a d20. On a 15 or higher, the zombie is instead reduced to 1 hit point.

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 8 (-1) **Wis** 8 (-1)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 1 (-5) **Cha** 3 (-4)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Chapter 2

This marks the beginning of the second chapter of *Dark Legacy of Evard*. The encounters in this chapter assume that the characters are 2nd level. If most of your group is 1st level, see **Adjusting the Encounters** on page 2. Each character has had an extended rest and should have full hit points and healing surges, as well as 1 action point and access to his or her daily powers.

Despair Deck: If you are using this component, have each player draw a card from the Despair Deck. A player's card affects his or her character.

Session 5: Vistani

Duponde's long night has finally come to an end. With the arrival of dawn, the town shifted back from the Shadowfell to the world. The question is how long the respite might last, and whether the characters can unravel the mystery of what has happened here.

Valkan's Summons

Shortly after the characters finish the extended rest, a human boy named Valkan comes to them to deliver a message. Valkan is a Vistani lad, part of a group that knows much about the Shadowfell. When he comes, read:

You are just readying yourselves when a dark-haired human teenager approaches. He bows to you and says, "Forgive me for troubling you, masters. I am Valkan of the Vistani. My grandmother told me to tell you that you must come to her house today, before night falls again. She peers into the unseen world, and she says that you must know what she sees. I can take you."

Valkan is a quiet, serious boy who seems wiser than his years. He is very polite, and he replies with answers such as "Mother Grivelda said you would say that," "I know little of such things, but Mother Grivelda is very wise," or "You should ask Mother Grivelda; please, it is not far to her house."

History (DC 12): The Vistani are a clannish people who are known as rovers, mystics, and troublemakers. They're said to travel into the Shadowfell from time to time.

Insight (DC 12): Valkan is sincere. He earnestly believes that it's vital for the characters to speak with his grandmother as soon as possible.

If the characters are reticent about following Valkan, other people in Duponde suggest that it might be wise to hear what the elderly soothsayer has to say. They don't fully trust the Vistani woman, but they know of Grivelda's reputation as a seer of that which is hidden. Assuming the characters agree to follow Valkan, allow them to make any preparations they wish to make before setting out. Continue with Mother Grivelda's House.

Mother Grivelda's House

When the characters agree to follow Valkan to his grandmother's house, read:

Valkan leads along the road heading south from Duponde into the countryside. After a walk of a mile or so, he turns down a lane leading to a lonely farmhouse that has a large, painted wagon parked in its fenced yard. He shows you to the house's front door and knocks once before going inside.

"Grandmother, I have brought them," he calls.

Through the open door, you see an old woman in a colorful shawl sitting by a fire. "Good, Valkan, good," she answers. "Be a sweet lad and put the teapot on the fire for me. Our visitors and I have much to talk about."

She waits for you to come in, and then gives you a chilling smile. "Now, sweeties, answer my riddle: Who is buried in Evard's Tomb?"

Grivelda acts like a kindly grandmother, calling her guests "child" or "sweetie" and smiling at compliments paid her. But every now and then her voice sharpens and her gentle manner falls away, replaced by a tone of cold, calculating certainty. She is highly perceptive and picks up on any skepticism or doubt.

NATHAIRE'S JOURNAL

Those who possess Nathaire's journal might want to read through it and determine what exactly he was up to. However, the journal consists of difficult arcane lore, cryptic symbols, and a tricky code Nathaire created to protect his notes from snooping eyes. It takes hours to read. The extended rest at the start of this session provides the characters with their first opportunity to decipher the journal.

Deciphering the writing is a simple skill challenge. Each try requires 2 hours and a DC 19 Arcana, History, or Insight check. The readers successfully solve the journal if they achieve 4 successes before 3 failures. If a character fails, he or she can't try it again until gaining a level. Successful readers gain an advantage in the skill challenge in Session 13 and learn:

- Nathaire is a talented wizard and a student of umbral (shadow) magic.
- He is extremely ambitious and impatient, seeking shortcuts to true power.
- He has created a ritual he intended to use to summon the soul of a dead spellcaster so that he can drain it of arcane energy, storing the stolen power in an orb or similar vessel.
- Nathaire has been searching for Evard's Tomb because Evard is famed as the discoverer of shadow magic. Nathaire dreams of making himself just as powerful as Evard was.

Grivelda knows or guesses everything covered in the adventure background. She knows Evard is the one who survived the wizards' duel fifty years past and that he buried Vontarin in Duponde's graveyard under a false name. She has no idea where Evard is now or whether he is still alive. However, her gift of second sight has shown her that Vontarin's ghost possessed the rash wizard who disturbed the tomb. Specific replies Grivelda might give include:

Who's buried in Evard's Tomb? *"Not Evard, my children. The spirits made the truth known to Mother Grivelda. You see, long ago, Evard came to Duponde and defeated his enemy. He buried Vontarin in Duponde's graveyard, and allowed everyone to believe that it was he who died that night—a clever ploy for a man who has as many enemies as Evard does."*

What did Nathaire do? *"Was that his name? I have seen only his face. I did not meet him, but I know that he was an ambitious young wizard, full of confidence and the desire for power. I know that he woke Vontarin's ghost, children. How or why, I cannot say."*

Why did Duponde slip into the shadows? *"It is the curse of Evard. He crafted terrible spells to imprison his enemy Vontarin if he should ever grow restless in his grave. Those spells now imprison us, as well."*

Isn't Duponde safe now? *"Oh no, my sweeties. At each sunset, Duponde again falls into shadow, and there it stays until sunup comes again. For a few days and nights, it will stay like that, but soon, soon, Duponde will not return from the dark side. Evard's curse is inevitable."*

How can we save Duponde? *"You must set right what the young wizard put wrong. Vontarin's soul walks free of its old bones, within the young wizard, and Evard's curse seeks to trap Evard's enemy in shadows forever. Quiet Vontarin again, and quiet Evard's curse in doing so. You must find the young wizard and wrest Vontarin's soul from within him."*

Where is Vontarin now? Or Nathaire? *"It is hard to see, my children. They might be on the other side. But I might, if I were you, begin by looking in Vontarin's manor. His soul surely has not forgotten the house he lived in for so many years."*

This begins the Explore Vontarin's Manse quest.

Howling Wolves

When the players are done speaking with Mother Grivelda, or when you're ready to continue with the combat encounter for the session, go to the **Howling Wolves** encounter. Drawn to the outskirts of Duponde by the dark curse that has settled over the town, a werewolf and its pack of gray wolves are on the hunt.

GRIVELDA'S FORTUNE TELLING

Mother Grivelda offers to tell the fortune of any character who wants it done. Have the player roll a d20. Record the result for later. Don't tell the player what the roll means until the player makes an attack roll or a saving throw later in the encounter.

On a roll of 10 or higher, the player can substitute that roll for one other attack roll or saving throw made later during this session. Grivelda describes this as "Fortune smiles upon you soon!"

On a roll of 9 or lower, the player must substitute the roll for the first attack roll or saving throw result of 10 or higher he or she rolls. Grivelda clucks her tongue and says, "An ill hour approaches. Be careful!"

Howling Wolves

Encounter Level 1

Setup

1 frenzied werewolf (F)
3 gray wolves (W)
Mother Grivelda
Valkan

Characters start in the cramped kitchen and sitting room of the farmhouse. Any characters who chose to stand watch or remain outside are within a couple of squares of the front door.

When the encounter begins, read:

A howl rises just outside. Three lean wolves bound through the trees toward the house. A humanoid wolf-creature that has long claws runs swiftly on its hind legs alongside the beasts.

"Grandmother, wolves!" Valkan cries.

Mother Grivelda nods grimly. "Dark creatures stir under the shadow's touch, boy. This is only the beginning. Let us hope our visitors can protect us."

Tactics

The pack tries to force the front door, and if that fails, the creatures try to scramble in through windows in the bedrooms and the hall. If the characters come outside to fight, the monsters oblige. At first, the pack focuses on the characters rather than the Vistani.

Frenzied Werewolf: This lycanthrope begins the encounter in hybrid form, and it uses its *lycanthrope fury* power recklessly.

Gray Wolves: These canines surround and flank their opponents, knocking foes prone and savaging them on the ground. If the werewolf and at least one gray wolf are killed, the remaining gray wolves might run away.

Frenzied Werewolf (F) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger), human

HP 63; **Bloodied** 31 **Initiative** +6
AC 18, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16 **Perception** +9
Speed 6 (8 in wolf form) Low-light vision

Traits

Regeneration
The werewolf regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the werewolf takes damage from a silvered weapon, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Standard Actions

Claw ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The werewolf must be in wolf or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, or 2d8 + 8 against a bloodied target, and the target falls prone.

Bite (disease) **✦ At-Will**
Requirement: The werewolf must be in wolf or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage. At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts werewolf moon frenzy (stage 1).

Club (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Requirement: The werewolf must be in human or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 2 damage, or 2d8 + 7 against a bloodied target.

Lycanthrope Fury ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The werewolf must be in hybrid form.
Effect: The werewolf uses *claw* and *bite*. Then the werewolf takes 5 damage.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) **✦ At-Will**
Effect: The werewolf alters its physical form to appear as a Medium wolf, unique human, or hybrid.

Skills Bluff +8, Intimidate +8

Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 17 (+6)	**Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 18 (+7)	**Int** 10 (+3)	**Cha** 11 (+3)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment club

3 Gray Wolves (W) **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural beast

HP 38; **Bloodied** 19 **Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13 **Perception** +7
Speed 8 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage, or 2d6 + 5 against a prone target. If the wolf has combat advantage against the target, the target falls prone.
Effect: The wolf shifts up to 4 squares.

Str 13 (+2)	**Dex** 16 (+4)	**Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 2 (-3)	**Cha** 10 (+1)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

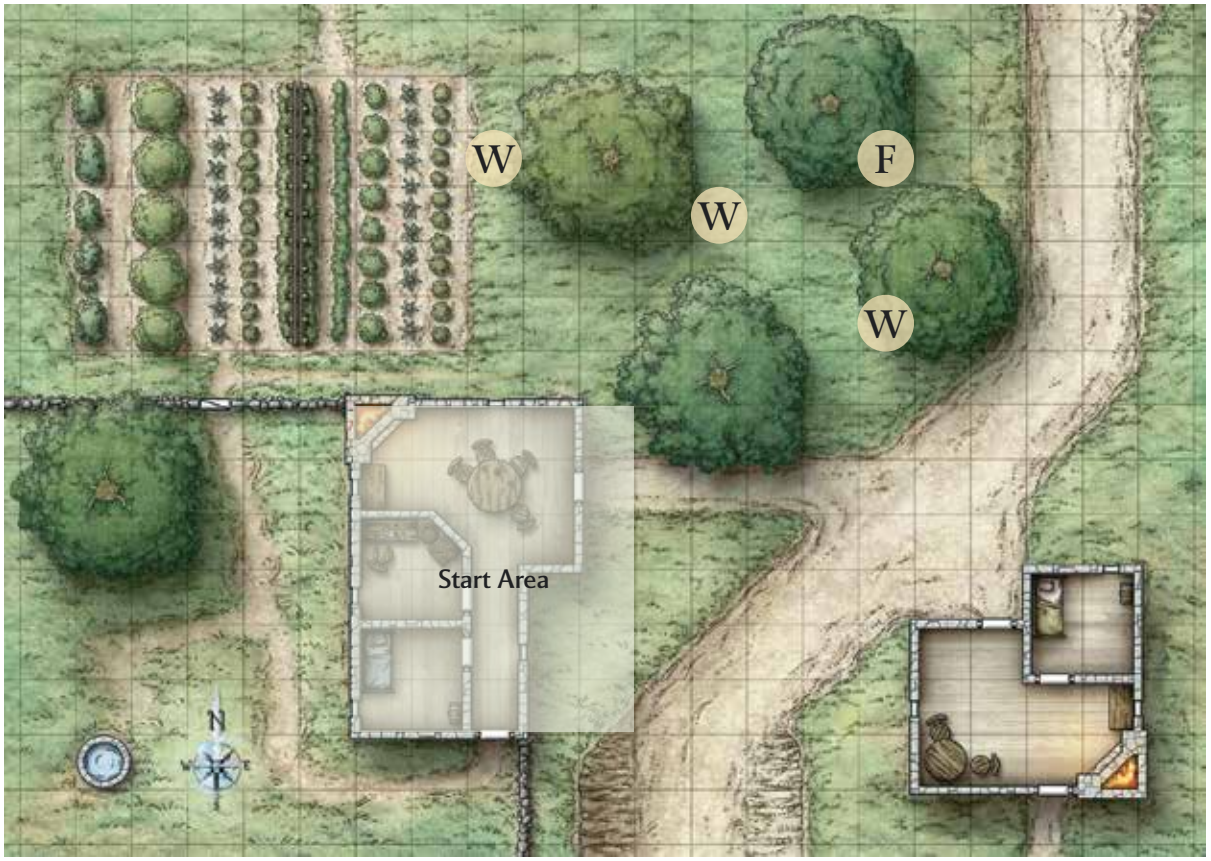
Werewolf Moon Frenzy **Level 4 Disease**
This disease starts with a fever, which soon becomes a violent and unpredictable rage.

Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease.
Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, the target takes a -2 penalty to Will.
Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, whenever the target becomes bloodied, it makes a melee basic attack as a free action against an ally adjacent to it.
Stage 3: While affected by stage 3, whenever the target is hit by an attack, it makes a melee basic attack as a free action against an ally adjacent to it.
Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 1 or 2.
10 or Lower: The stage of the disease increases by 1.
11-14: No change.
15 or Higher: The stage of the disease decreases by 1.

Development

Valkan and Grivelda aren't combatants in this encounter, but as a Vistani wise woman, Grivelda has some power. At the end of the first round, she moves to within sight of the werewolf and gives it the infamous Vistani *evil eye*, saying, "I twice curse you, foul shapeshifter, and sever you from the moon's dark blessing!" This causes the lycanthrope to lose its regeneration and ability to pass on moon frenzy (save ends). Grivelda then grabs Valkan and her broomstick, thumps her broom on the floor, and magically jumps into the rafters of the house with the boy. She and Valkan remain safe in the rafters until combat ends.

To add tension to the scene, you might want a monster to attack one of the Vistani. Assume that the Vistani are hit if attacked, using their injuries for color. They come to serious harm only if the characters utterly fail to defend the farm.



Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Doors: Exterior doors are closed, but neither locked nor barred. A character inside a house and adjacent to such a door can bar it as a minor action. It takes a DC 19 Athletics check to break through the barred door.

Interior doors are open. If a character closes a door, a gray wolf can force it open with a successful DC 12 Strength check made as a move action.

Garden Vegetation: These plants are difficult terrain.

Fieldstone Fence: The fence is difficult terrain.

Fireplace: A fire burns here. A creature forced into the fireplace square takes 1d6 fire damage.

Furnishings: The bed, chairs, table, counter, and other furnishings are difficult terrain.

Trees: A tree trunk's square is difficult terrain. Climbing it requires a DC 8 Athletics check. The trees are about 20 feet tall.

Well: A sturdy wooden cap makes this well nothing more than difficult terrain.

Windows: These casements are 2 feet wide, 3 feet tall, and 4 feet off the ground outside. A creature can climb through an open window. Doing so requires a DC 8 Athletics or Acrobatics check and 2 extra squares of movement.

A character adjacent to a window can close or open its heavy shutters as a minor action. It takes a DC 12 Athletics check to force a shuttered window open from outside.

Conclusion

Grivelda reveals any information required to start the characters on the aforementioned quests.

The old woman is capable of brewing common potions and silvering weapons. The characters have to pay for such items and services, but Grivelda offers her saviors a 20 percent discount.

Reward

Each characters gains 250 XP at the end of the session for interacting with Valkan and Mother Grivelda and for battling the monsters.

Treasure: Grivelda is grateful for the protection. She retrieves a bundle from beneath loose boards in the kitchen floor and gives it to the characters, saying, "I think you can find a use for this, children." It's a *+1 vicious weapon*. She also gives the party 2 *potions of healing*.

Session 6: Vontarin's House

With the advice of Mother Grivelda to guide them, the characters have a daunting task ahead. They need to find Vontarin's restless ghost and put it to rest again. Grivelda believes that Vontarin might have returned to his old home. Since the characters have few other leads at this point, this is clearly the next move.

Any of the people in Duponde can direct the characters to Vontarin's old manor. It stands about a mile southwest of town. If Valkan survived the fight against the wolf pack, he is happy to lead the party directly to the place, although he is unwilling to venture into the manor grounds.

New Owners

Vontarin's house has been abandoned for decades, but a few months ago, the mage Harrumor and his murderous gang of tiefling cutthroats discovered the place and decided to make it their hideout. The tieflings have been preying on barge traffic on the nearby river, waylaying the occasional traveler on the road to Duponde, and pilfering from the town's warehouses and stores. Townsfolk know that bandits lurk nearby but have no idea who they might be or where they're hiding.

After possessing Nathaire, Vontarin went straight to his old home, only to find it in ruins. He managed to fight through Harrumor's gang and descend into the dungeons. There, he searched for his old possessions. Discovering that the meddlesome friars of Saint Avarthil removed the items decades ago, Vontarin left in disgust.

Since the manse is their secret hideout, Harrumor's followers are determined to kill any intruders. It's almost certain that the characters clash with the tieflings and their pets just by setting foot in the manse. As soon as the tieflings discover any interloper in or near their lair, the battle is on. Go to the **New Owners** encounter.

Manse Grounds

When the characters reach the manse, read:

In the countryside south of Duponde, you follow an old cart track. A couple miles from town, you find the correct turn onto a long, tree-lined lane that winds through the thickets on a small hill and finally ends in a cobblestone court before a ruined mansion.

A large fountain stands in the center of the court, but its water is black and slimy. The upper story shows signs of fire damage, and most of the roof has collapsed. Small gargoyles and elegant cornices lean at crooked angles. Thick ivy covers the walls and grows over what's left of the roof. Heavy shutters cover the windows. A large front door faces the fountain, with a smaller door in the side of the building.

If a character succeeds at a DC 19 Perception check, add:
A faint whiff of wood smoke is on the air, along with a musky animal scent. You see that the path leading up to the manse is well trodden by both humanoids and beasts.

Manse Interior

When characters look around the manse, read:
The furnishings and décor of this manor are mildewed and ruined. Cobwebs fill the corners, and fallen ceiling plaster has been pushed into piles. Little remains of the upper floor except charred beams. Mice, rats, and other vermin have left ample signs of their presence in the old house.

Foyer

The room looking out over the courtyard and fountain was the manse's entrance hall.

This room was the manor's grand foyer. A sweeping staircase led to the second floor, but it collapsed long ago. Its wreckage has been shoved aside, but scorch marks on the wall show where it stood. Several old chairs that are in reasonably good shape have been arranged in a sitting area.

Kitchen

The room at the west end of the manor is the kitchen. A large hearth is intact and functional. The tieflings do most of their cooking here.

A large hearth dominates this room, which also has a table and chairs. Warm embers glow in the hearth, and fresh firewood is stacked nearby.

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Perception check notices that a few of the kitchen knives are silver. Treat these as silvered daggers.

Drawing Room

The room at the manor's east end is in the best shape of any of the remaining rooms. The tieflings use it as their common room.

The smell of mildew is less apparent in this large parlor. Old portraits in gilded frames hang on the walls. The most prominent shows a haughty human nobleman with a shaved head, fierce eyes, and a forked goatee. Several chairs have been positioned around a table that is covered in playing cards and coins.

The tieflings were in the middle of a card game when the characters arrived. A character inspecting the table finds several stacks of gold, silver, and copper coins totaling 35 gold pieces in value. There is also a complete deck of *Three Dragon Ante* cards.

A character that succeeds on a DC 19 Perception check or has an equivalent passive Perception notices that the word "Nimdel" has been scratched onto the table with a knife. This is the password for the trap in the basement.

Banquet Room

The largest room in the manse is the banquet room, along the south side of the old building.

This must have been a grand dining room in its day. Remains of a balcony encircle it on three sides, and a row of high windows faces south. Large patches of sky show through the ceiling and the ruined floor above, and the great windows are broken. An old table and chairs stand near a heap of provisions in sacks, barrels, crates, and other containers. Close at hand is a trapdoor in the floor.

Provisions: These goods are new and bear the markings of various trading posts and provisioning companies in the area. Most of the goods are of no value to the characters, though they do include a *potion of healing*, a quiver of 20 arrows, 2 sunrods, 50 feet of hempen rope, and a *belt of vigor*.

The tieflings looted the provisions from nearby farms and caravans. Marshal Grimbold would be very interested to learn that they've been found here. He lets characters keep the items mentioned above.

Trapdoor: The trapdoor reveals a staircase leading down to the manse cellars. Characters can investigate during during Session 7.

New Owners

Encounter Level 2

A character can approach the manor quietly with a successful DC 16 Stealth check. Failure to approach stealthily starts a battle.

Setup

2 crested felldrakes (C)
3 Fell Court ruffians (R)
1 hissing felldrake (H)
1 Fell Court underboss (U)
Trapdoor (T)

The characters might see within the building. Use the descriptions in the earlier section on the manor. Describe the monsters as they attack.

When the characters near the manor, read:
The manor house isn't as abandoned as it looks. Soft sounds of movement and reptilian hissing from within indicate someone or something is home.

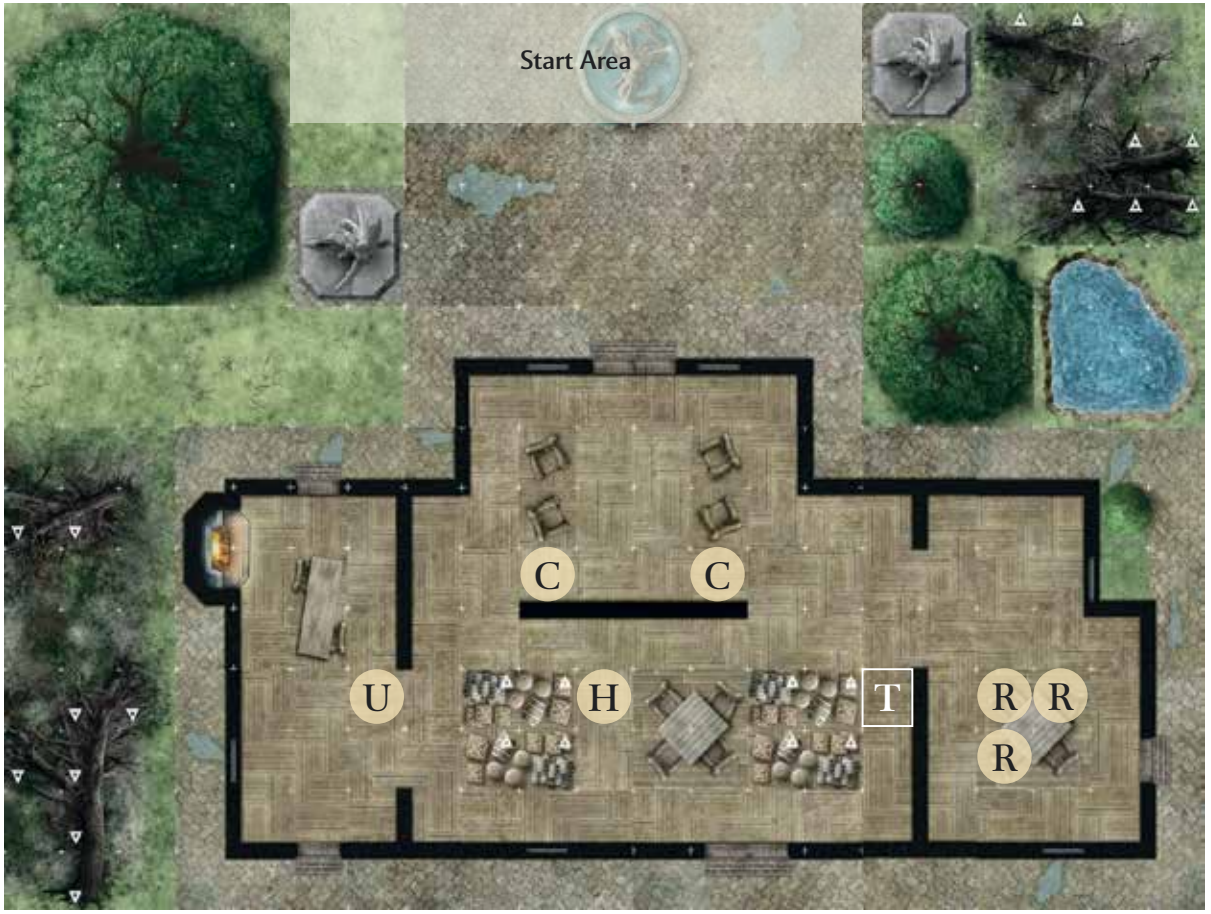
Tactics

The tieflings prefer to fight in the manor, but if necessary, they engage the characters outside. They try to use the doorway as a choke point.

Fell Court Ruffians: These tieflings come to close quarters beside their felldrake pets and use their *dances with drakes* power. If the underboss and half the drakes are dead, any surviving ruffians flee.

Fell Court Underboss: This tiefling also enters melee combat. He uses *drake wrangler* to help his felldrake pets.

Felldrakes: Crested felldrakes fight better in a pack, and they try to remain near each other to take advantage of *pack frenzy*. The hissing felldrake moves to positions where it can use *fell spit* against open targets.



Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Doors: Exterior doors are closed and locked from inside. It requires a DC 12 Thievery check to pick a lock or a DC 19 Athletics to force open a door.

Fallen Trees: This debris is difficult terrain.

Fountain and Pond: These water features are difficult terrain.

Furnishings: The bed, chairs, table, counter, and other furnishings are difficult terrain.

Provisions: These squares are difficult terrain.

Statues: The pedestals are 5 feet tall, and they're blocking terrain. A creature can climb to the top of one with a successful DC 8 Athletics check.

Trapdoor: This access is in plain view. It leads to a stairway down to the cellars, which the characters can explore next session.

Trees: A tree trunk's square is difficult terrain. Climbing it requires a DC 8 Athletics check. The trees are about 20 feet tall.

Windows: These casements are 2 feet wide, 3 feet tall, and 5 feet off the ground outside. Each one is

3 Fell Court Ruffians (R) **Level 2 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3
AC 14, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 **Perception** +2
Speed 6 Low-light vision
Resist 5 fire

Standard Actions

⊕ **Club** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC, or +8 vs. AC if the target is bloodied
Hit: 5 damage.
Miss: 3 damage.

Triggered Actions

⸸ **Dances with Drakes** ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: A drake ally makes a melee attack against an enemy adjacent to the ruffian.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The ruffian uses *club* against the triggering enemy.

Skills Bluff +5, Stealth +8
Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 18 (+5) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+0)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, club

shuttered, but a character adjacent to a window can close or open its shutters as a minor action. A creature can climb through an open window. Doing so requires a DC 8 Athletics or Acrobatics check and 2 extra squares of movement.

Reward

Each characters gains 200 XP at the end of the session for battling the monsters.

Providing a Hook

Characters might wonder whether it's necessary to continue investigating Vontarin's manor. To provide a hook for them to continue, the tieflings might disclose the following pieces of information during combat (bemoaning their bad luck), or after the battle if the characters spare one of them.

- ✦ The gang didn't find anything useful in the manor when it first came here.

Fell Court Underboss (U) **Level 3 Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling

HP 47; **Bloodied** 23 **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14 **Perception** +8
Speed 6 Low-light vision
Resist 5 fire

Traits

☼ **Drake Wrangler** ✦ **Aura** 1
Drake allies gain resist 5 fire and a +2 power bonus to AC while in the aura.

☼ **Hellbound** (fire) ✦ **Aura** 1
Any creature takes 5 fire damage when it leaves the aura.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bastard Sword** (fire, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC, or +9 vs. AC if the target is bloodied
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.
Effect: Until the end of the underboss's next turn, the target takes 5 fire damage each time it uses an attack power that doesn't include the underboss as a target.

⸸ **Diabolical Strike** (fire, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex, or +9 vs. Reflex if the target is bloodied
Hit: 1d10 + 6 fire damage. If the underboss has combat advantage against the target, the target cannot shift until the end of the underboss's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Infernal Wrath (fire) ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An enemy within 10 squares of the underboss hits it with an attack.
Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 1d6 + 4 fire damage.

Skills Bluff +9, Intimidate +9, Stealth +9, Streetwise +9
Str 18 (+5) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 18 (+5) **Cha** 17 (+4)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Infernal
Equipment leather armor, bastard sword

- ✦ A darkness descended on the manse last night, and a chill spread through the house.
- ✦ The gang's boss, Harrumor, has no tolerance for intruders, but even he couldn't stop "the wizard."
- ✦ After dawn came, Harrumor and some of the other tieflings went downstairs to investigate.

Hissing Felldrake (H) **Level 3 Artillery**
Medium natural beast (reptile)

HP 38; **Bloodied** 19 **Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14 **Perception** +8
Speed 7
Resist 10 acid

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage.

Fell Spit (acid) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10 + 6 acid damage.
Effect: If the target is bloodied, it is slowed until the end of its next turn. If the target is already slowed, it is instead dazed (save ends).

Skills Stealth +10
Str 15 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 3 (-3) **Cha** 13 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

2 Crested Felldrakes (C) **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Small natural beast (reptile)

HP 39; **Bloodied** 19 **Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 12 **Perception** +8
Speed 8

Traits

Pack Frenzy
The felldrake gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls while adjacent to a felldrake ally.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and a felldrake ally within 2 squares of the felldrake can shift up to 2 squares as an immediate reaction.

Triggered Actions

Undaunted Strider ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: The felldrake is hit by an opportunity attack.
Effect (Free Action): The felldrake shifts up to 2 squares.

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +9
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 3 (-3) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Session 7: Vontarin's Cellars

Characters began their search through the ruins of Vontarin's house last session, only to discover that a gang of vicious tiefling bandits now occupies the place. In this session, the characters continue their explorations, descending into the cellars where the mage once had his workrooms and laboratories.

Nathaire is no longer in the manse. Vontarin's ghost possessing him, he searched the old home earlier in the adventure. Finding that the friars of Saint Avarthil Monastery removed his tomes and implements decades ago, he was furious. Before he could leave, dawn came and he was stranded in the Shadowfell. However, characters can find a clue to Nathaire's current whereabouts in Vontarin's secret cellars.

Begin this session with the characters assembled on the stairs leading down to the cellar from the trapdoor in the manse's banquet hall.

Cellars

The tieflings use the cellar as their chief hideout.

A steep, narrow stairway descends 20 feet from the trapdoor to a dank passageway of gray-green brick.

Imp Statue

Vontarin created a magic trap here to guard the entrance to his secret sanctum. An invisible glyph triggers a blast of fire to fill the short hallway at the foot of the stairs. If an intruder sets foot in the cistern room without speaking a password, fire bursts out from the imp statue. The password is "Nimdel," which the tieflings discovered in scattered notes they found in the house above.

To the right of the stairway's bottom stands the statue of a small winged devil, grinning slyly. It faces the hallway to the left.

Cistern Room

Three large pits in this room were once cisterns used to store water collected from catchments in the manor's roof. Fire destroyed those catchments as it ravaged the upper floors years ago, and the cisterns have run dry.

Three large pits yawn in the floor of this room. Each has a low lip of masonry surrounding it and is about 10 feet deep. The pit floors are full of damp brick and debris. Barrels, sacks, and crates of different sorts are heaped at the west end of the room, next to iron double doors.

Fiery Imp Statue **Level 3 Trap**
Object

Detect Perception DC 19, Arcana DC 17 **Initiative** –
HP 20
Resist 10 to all damage

Triggered Actions

Attack ✦ At-Will

Trigger: A creature enters the glyph square (the square marked T on the map on page 39) without speaking the password.
Attack: Close burst 2 (originates from the imp statue; creatures in the burst); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 19. *Success:* The glyph is disabled for 5 minutes. *Failure (14 or lower):* The glyph triggers.
✦ **Alternative Password:** Arcana DC 19. *Requirement:* The creature must be adjacent to the glyph. *Success:* The creature can pass through the glyph unharmed for five minutes. *Failure (14 or lower):* The glyph triggers.
✦ **Jump:** Athletics DC 12. A creature can jump over the glyph, but the angle and stairs make it difficult. *Failure (11 or lower):* The character triggers the glyph.
✦ **Password:** *Requirement:* The creature must be adjacent to the glyph. A creature that speaks the password can pass through the glyph unharmed for five minutes.

The iron doors are unlocked and open easily. Containers here hold provisions like those on the mansion's first floor. These provisions include fourteen casks of wine, five tankards of ale, several pounds of dried meats, and a variety of clothes.

Misty Hallway

This was formerly another one of Vontarin's traps, but the old enchantments have dissipated. Now all that remains is purple smoke.

The hallway here is filled with a thick, purple mist that hangs eerily in place. Through the mist is a hall that continues to another set of doors.

The misty squares are lightly obscured. They're otherwise harmless. If the party takes too long to enter the mist, you can begin Encounter 7 by having one or more of the tieflings step out into the hallway on some routine errand.

When characters move beyond the mist, read:
Large iron double doors lead to the north and to the east. Judging by the brackets and rusted chains discarded in the corner, you can tell the set of doors to the north was chained up at some point. A broken bronze seal that secured the chain in place remains among the links. Glyphs and a stylized sun symbol adorn the seal.

Religion (DC 12): *The seal—which looks aged but recently broken—is intended to avert evil. It's a prayer to Pelor.*

Unknown to anyone still in Duponde, friars from Saint Avarthil Monastery sealed the northern doors when they emptied Vontarin's cellars after his disappearance. Harrumor and his tieflings broke the seal when they took over the manse.

Menagerie

This cage-filled room is where Vontarin kept interesting creatures he intended to study. It now serves as felldrake kennels.

Half a dozen iron cages line the walls of this large room. Old straw covers the cage floors, which are otherwise devoid of furnishings. More goods are heaped up against the far wall.

If the characters haven't begun combat, they find some of the villains here. Go to the **Fell Designs** encounter.

Vontarin Family Crypt

This room was the burial chamber for Vontarin's ancestors. The tiefling bandits have set up a few bedrolls here, making it into a barracks.

Two impressive stone sarcophagi stand in the center of this room. One cover bears the image of a regal human lord and the other a noble lady. Rows of old bronze plaques line the walls, marking the locations of additional tombs. Along one side of the room are several bedrolls.

If the characters haven't begun combat, they find some of the bandits here. Go to the **Fell Designs** encounter.

Perception (DC 12): The eastern sarcophagus has scrape marks on the lip of the lid, signs of having recently been opened. The tiefling bandits are using the sarcophagus to store their accumulated loot. Several large sacks contain 1,000 sp, 240 gp, a silver necklace decorated with tiny diamonds (250 gp), and *+1 black iron armor.*

Vontarin's Workroom

Vontarin conducted most of his magic research in this chamber. Harrumor, the tieflings' leader, chose this room as his own when the gang settled on the manor as their hideout.

Bookshelves, worktables for alchemical instruments, and cupboards full of glassware indicate that this was the laboratory of a wizard. A good deal of material is missing—the shelves are mostly empty and much of the glassware is broken. Complex arcane sigils inscribed on the walls have been deliberately damaged with hammer and chisel, leaving small piles of stone chips beneath each one. Judging by the dust on the shelves and glass, the place was cleaned out a long time ago.

Fell Designs

Encounter Level 2

Setup

GROUP 1 (MENAGERIE)
4 Fell Court ruffians (R)
1 Fell Court blackheart (B)

GROUP 2 (CRYPTS)
4 Fell Court ruffians (R)
1 Fell Court blackheart (B)
Harrumor, Fell Court hellmage (H)

Do not place any of the monsters on the map until the characters see the creatures, such as by opening a door into one of the inhabited areas. Begin combat with the first monster group the characters disturb. The unengaged group hears the nearby fighting and joins the battle starting on the second round. Creatures in the reinforcing group gather on their side of the doors and throw them open. Start these enemies on the map near the doorway leading into their room.

Tactics

Fell Court Blackhearts: These tieflings begin battle by using *smoke form* and moving into flanking positions behind the characters' front line. They end *smoke form* to use *sly attack*, and return to *smoke form* on the following round, alternating. If all other tieflings fall, remaining blackhearts flee in *smoke form*.

Harrumor: Harrumor stays back from the melee. He relies on *infernal bolt* and picks off spellcasters.

Fell Court Ruffians: These tieflings fight to defend the blackhearts and Harrumor. The ruffians flee if they're the only tieflings left in the battle.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Small oil lamps in the menagerie, crypts, and workroom provide bright light in these chambers. The cellars are otherwise dark.

Cages: Doors to the cages are unlocked, and no keys remain here. The bars block movement, but neither block line of sight nor line of effect.

Doors: These doors are rusty iron plates riveted on an iron frame. They are unlocked.

Mist: Misty squares are lightly obscured.

Furnishings and Provisions: These squares are difficult terrain.

Sarcophagi: These tombs are difficult terrain. Opening a sarcophagus requires a DC 14 Strength check, but only dust and old bones lay within.

Bookshelves and Rack: These features are tall and are blocking terrain.

CONTINUING THE STORY

The tieflings might disclose the following pieces of information during combat or after the battle, if the characters spare one of them.

- The mansion was already looted when they arrived months ago.
- The wizard entered the basement and made its way toward the laboratory. They tried to fight him, but he was too powerful.
- The wizard acted as if possessed by some foul spirit.
- Before they fled from the basement, one of them managed to glimpse it searching its laboratory. The wizard seemed furious that so much was missing.

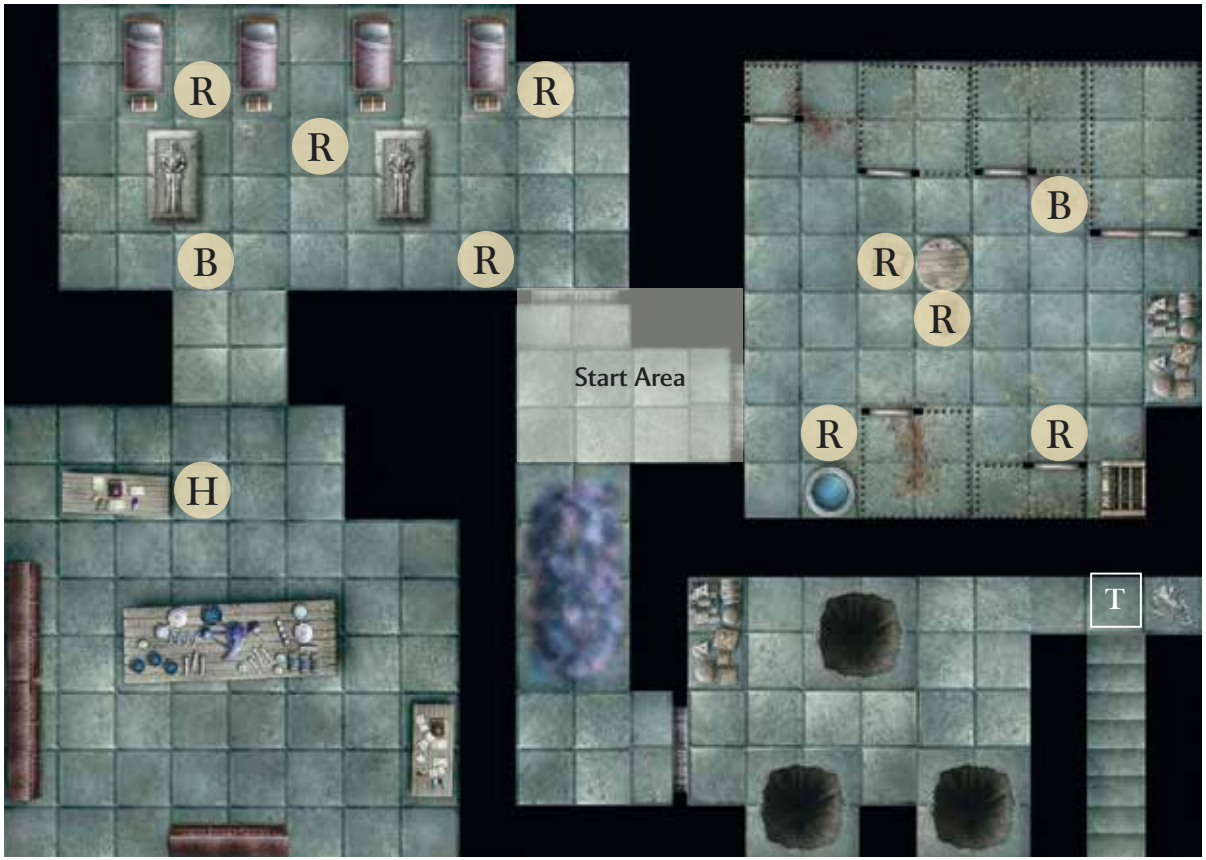
Conclusion

Make it clear to the players that if Nathaire came here, he found nothing. By the time the characters have finished exploring the cellars, it's getting late in the day. They've exhausted the leads available in Vontarin's house, so it's time to return to Duponde.

Reward

For battling the monsters, facing the trap, and completing the quest Search the Manse, each character receives 350 XP.

Treasure: In addition, the characters can recover a *+1 earthroot staff* from Harrumor.



Harrumor, Fell Court Hellmage (H) **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 **Initiative** +6
AC 18, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17 **Perception** +12
Speed 6 Low-light vision
Resist 5 fire

Standard Actions

Staff (weapon) ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC, or +10 vs. AC if the target is bloodied
Hit: 2d4 + 7 damage.

Infernal Bolt (fire, implement, radiant) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex, or +10 vs. Reflex if the target is bloodied
Hit: 1d8 + 3 fire and radiant damage, and ongoing 5 fire and radiant damage (save ends).

Triggered Actions

Infernal Wrath (fire) **✦ Encounter**
Trigger: An enemy within 10 squares of Harrumor hits it with an attack.
Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 1d6 + 5 fire damage.

See You in Hell ✦ Encounter
Trigger: Harrumor drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Harrumor uses *infernal bolt*, and the attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Skills Arcana +12, Bluff +10, History +12, Stealth +11
Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 20 (+7)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 21 (+7) **Cha** 17 (+5)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Infernal
Equipment staff, dagger

2 Fell Court Blackhearts (B) **Level 2 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling

HP 37; **Bloodied** 18 **Initiative** +10
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13 **Perception** +8
Speed 6 Low-light vision
Resist 5 fire

Traits

Blackhearted Scoundrel
Whenever the blackheart deals damage to an enemy granting combat advantage to it, that enemy cannot spend healing surges (save ends).

Standard Actions

Deadly Sickle (necrotic, weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC, or +8 vs. AC if the target is bloodied
Hit: 1d6 + 7 necrotic damage.

Sly Attack (necrotic, weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex, or +6 vs. AC if the target is bloodied
Hit: 1d6 + 7 necrotic damage, or 2d6 + 14 necrotic damage if the blackheart started its turn in smoke form.
Miss: Half damage.

Smoke Form ✦ At-Will
Effect: The blackheart assumes smoke form until it reverts to its normal form as a free action or until it drops to 0 hit points. While in smoke form, the blackheart cannot attack or be attacked and cannot regain hit points. Enemies can enter its space, and it can occupy the same space as another creature. It moves at full speed instead of half speed while squeezing.
If the effect ends while the blackheart is occupying another creature's space, the blackheart reverts to its normal form in the nearest unoccupied space.

Triggered Actions

Blood Curse ✦ Encounter
Trigger: The blackheart drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): One enemy that the blackheart can see loses a healing surge.

Infernal Wrath (fire) **✦ Encounter**
Trigger: An enemy within 10 squares of the blackheart hits it with an attack.
Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 1d6 + 3 fire damage.

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +9, Stealth +11, Streetwise +9
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 20 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 19 (+5) **Int** 13 (+2) **Cha** 17 (+4)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Infernal
Equipment leather armor, sickle

8 Fell Court Ruffians (R) **Level 2 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3
AC 14, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 **Perception** +2
Speed 6 Low-light vision
Resist 5 fire

Standard Actions

Club (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC, or +8 vs. AC if the target is bloodied
Hit: 5 damage.
Miss: 3 damage.

Skills Bluff +5, Stealth +8
Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 18 (+5) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+0)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, club

Session 8: Darkness Returns

When character return to Duponde, read:
You return to Duponde. The townspeople have spent the day fortifying the town. Duponde is full of unsettling rumors of dark apparitions, half-glimpsed monsters, and more. Most of the townsfolk are gathering in the chapel or the armory for protection as dusk approaches.

Characters can spend the last hour of the afternoon talking to Duponde's citizens and preparing for night.

When the characters finish talking, read:
At sunset, you feel the same strange sensation you felt the previous night. Air grows chill and an atmosphere of dread descends over the town.

Shortly after darkness falls, Marshal Grimbold comes to speak with you. "I heard that you went to see Mother Grivelda," he says. "What did she tell you? Did you have any luck tracking down our missing mage?"

Grimbold listens closely to anything the characters have to say.

When they finish, the marshal adds:
"I won't lie–I think we'll need your help again tonight. If you could guard the armory, Duponde would be further in your debt. It also seems that catching this Nathaire fellow is vital, too. Just before sunset, my guards saw a small humanoid in a black hood skulking near the south gate. They lost him in the alleys nearby. I don't know if it was Nathaire, but it could be worth checking."

Grimbold can provide directions to the part of town where the guards saw the dark figure. Now that night has fallen, he and his men don't dare split their strength any further. When the characters are finished speaking with Grimbold, the marshal takes his leave and heads to see to town defenses.

Decision Point

The characters have another choice to make. Do they guard the people of Duponde at the armory, or do they seek out the black-hooded creature that the guards failed to catch?

If the characters decide to stand guard, go to the **Rat Pack** encounter. Characters who decide to seek out the mysterious humanoid initiate the **Lonely Death** encounter.

Rat Pack

Encounter Level 3

Begin this encounter by reading:
Your presence at the armory must have deterred monsters from troubling the people here. Shadows flow like mist through the alleyways and cries echo through the darkness, but you spot no overt threats. A little before midnight, Tilda Grenfield, Harald the barkeep, and the dwarves–Katha, Kristyd, and Kildrak–show up at the armory. Each has minor wounds.

Tilda is furious. "Rats!" she cries. "Giant rats! They came out of nowhere and ran us out of the Old Owl. Please help! We can't stay on the streets all night."

5 Scurrying Wererats (W) **Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger), human

HP 37; **Bloodied** 18 **Initiative** +7
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 **Perception** +7
Speed 6, climb 4 (rat or hybrid form only) Low-light vision

Traits

Regeneration
The wererat regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the wererat takes damage from a silvered weapon, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Dagger** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in human or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage, or 2d6 + 6 if the wererat has combat advantage against the target.

⊕ **Bite** (disease) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in rat or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 4 damage. If the target is granting combat advantage to the wererat, it also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends). At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts wererat filth fever (stage 1).

Move Actions

Rat Scurry ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in rat form.
Effect: The wererat shifts up to its speed.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The wererat alters its physical form to appear as a Tiny rat, or a Medium unique human or hybrid.

Skills Bluff +6, Stealth +10

Str 10 (+1)	**Dex** 18 (+5)	**Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 15 (+3)	**Int** 13 (+2)	**Cha** 11 (+1)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment daggerv

Wererat Filth Fever **Level 3 Disease**
Those infected by this disease waste away as they alternately suffer chills and hot flashes.

Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease.
Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, the target loses a healing surge.
Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, the target loses a healing surge. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex.
Stage 3: While affected by stage 3, the target loses all healing surges and cannot regain hit points. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex.
Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 1 or 2.
8 or Lower: The stage of the disease increases by 1.
9–12: No change.
13 or Higher: The stage of the disease decreases by 1.

Setup

5 scurrying wererats (W)

When the characters go to investigate at the Old Owl, have them take positions, and read the following:

The Old Owl Inn stands before you in the gloom, a darker shadow against a black sky. Glimmers of light flicker in its windows from lamps and dying hearth fires. The crash of breaking dishes and the sound of scurrying movement come from within the common room.

Since the characters know the rats are inside, they can try to achieve surprise by gathering near a door or window and suddenly storming the building. Have the party attempt a DC 12 group Stealth check. If at least half the characters succeed, the party gains surprise.

Tactics

Wererats assume rat form, and use *rat scurry* to move into flanking positions. They rely on their *bite* attack, too. If only one wererat remains, it attempts to flee.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Glowing fireplace embers and several oil lamps turned down low, cast dim light over the entire area. Outside the inn, it's dark. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

Doors: The doors are closed but unlocked.

Fireplaces: Hot coals fill these hearths. A creature that enters a fireplace square takes 1d6 fire damage.

Furniture: Furnished squares are difficult terrain.

Conclusion

By defeating the rats, the characters clear the Old Owl of its unwanted guests and earn the heartfelt gratitude of Tilda Grenfield.

Filth Fever: Characters who the wererats bite might contract filth fever. Each character so bitten must attempt a saving throw at the end of the encounter.

Reward

For battling the monsters, each character receives 150 XP.

Lonely Death

Encounter Level 3

Setup

4 twig blight seedlings (S)
3 twig blight swampvines (T)
1 shadow bolter (B)

Begin this encounter by reading:
Following Grimbold's directions, you search the quarter of the town by the south gate. Much of this area is derelict even in the natural world. In the Shadowfell, it takes on an aura of desolation and brooding malevolence. Empty houses seem to watch you through broken black windows. Thick, thorny vines choke the walls of rundown buildings and rustle with stealthy movements.

A dark figure watches you from a nearby window. It quickly ducks back out of sight.

A shadow bolter spy loyal to Vontarin is skulking around in town, searching for any clues that might help its master uncover his old belongings.

Do not place the twig blights yet. Have the party make a DC 20 group Perception check. If at least half the characters succeed, place the twig blights on the map. Otherwise, they remain hidden until they act.

Tactics

The shadow bolter and the twig blights aren't allies in the strictest sense, but the dark one takes advantage of the distraction the plants provide. The dark one stealthily avoided the creatures to move into buildings that seemed promising. If forced outside, it gives the twig blights a wide berth.

Shadow Bolter: The shadow bolter remains in the house, firing through windows. It uses *black bolt* against any character in sight, but it tries to target those whom the twig blights flank to use its *deadly precision* ability. The bolter flees if any characters make it into the house.

Twig Blights: The swampvines move toward the nearest enemy, use *vine snare* to grab that foe, and then attack with *claw*. The seedlings attack, trying to flank opponents.

Features of the Area

Illumination: It's dark. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

Doors: Exterior doors are closed, but neither locked nor barred. Interior doors are closed and unlocked.

Fieldstone Fence: The fence is difficult terrain.

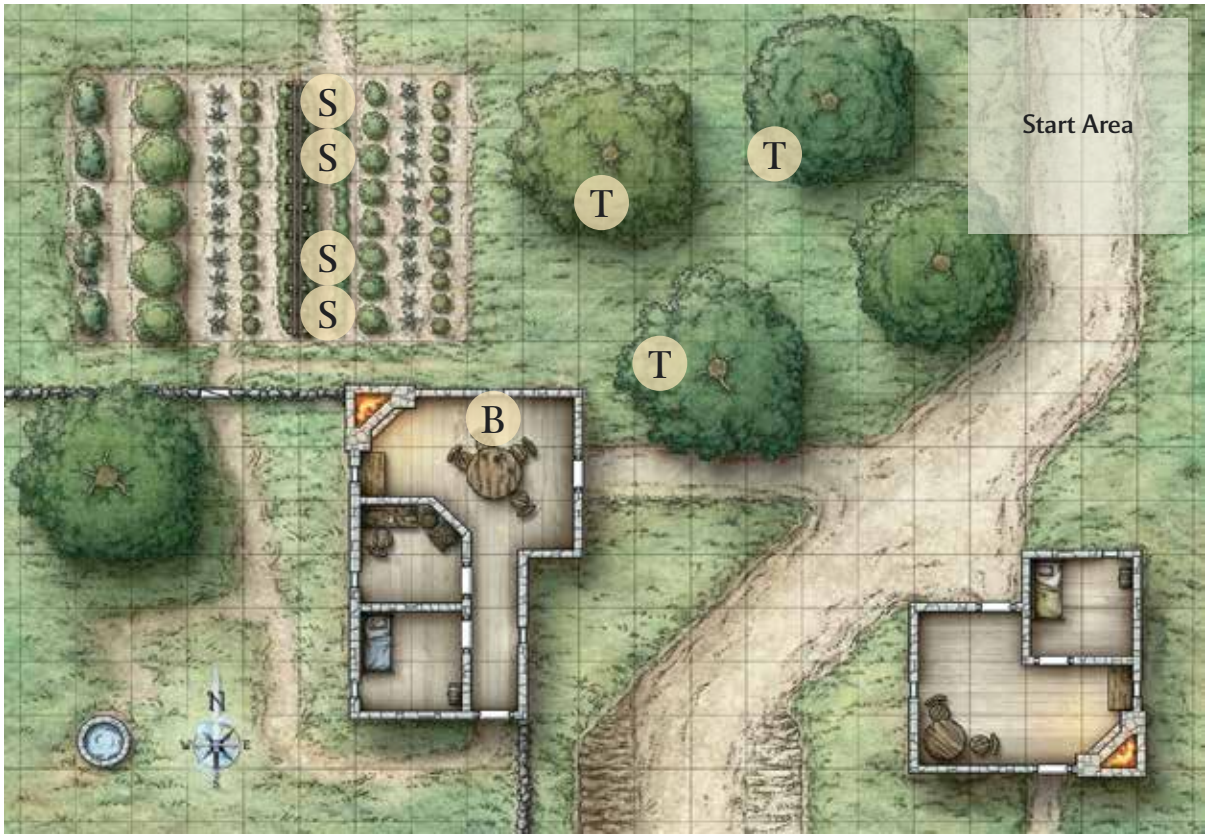
Furniture: Furnished squares are difficult terrain.

Trees: A tree trunk's square is difficult terrain. Climbing it requires a DC 8 Athletics check. The trees are about 20 feet tall.

Vegetation: These plants are difficult terrain.

Well: This damp, rock-lined hole is 20 feet deep. It requires a DC 13 Athletics check to climb.

Windows: These casements are 2 feet wide, 3 feet tall, and 4 feet off the ground outside. Climbing through a window requires 2 extra squares of movement and a DC 8 Athletics or Acrobatics check.



4 Twig Blight Seedlings (S) Skirmisher **Level 1 Minion**
Small fey humanoid (plant)

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +5
AC 15, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13 **Perception** +6
Speed 5 (forest walk), climb 5 Darkvision
Resist 5 poison

Traits

Rooted
When an effect forces the seedling to move through a pull, a push, or a slide, the seedling can move 3 squares fewer than the effect specifies.

Standard Actions

Claw (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Before the attack, the seedling shifts up to 2 squares.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 3 poison damage, or 5 poison damage if the target is granting combat advantage to the seedling.

Skills Stealth +8
Str 7 (-2) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+1)
Con 9 (-1) **Int** 5 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Elven

Conclusion

When a character reduces the dark one to 0 hit points, ask if the player wants to knock it unconscious. If offered its life, the dark one can confirm its mission. It knows that Vontarin is searching Saint Avarthil Monastery and plans to send an army of skeletons against the town this night. If the characters want to go to Saint Avarthil's, Grimbold begs them to defend the armory while he holds the chapel against the coming skeletons.

Reward

Each character receives 150 XP for this battle.

Treasure: The dark one carries a belt pouch containing 110 sp, 89 gp, and a large amethyst (100 gp). It might offer these treasures as a bribe to save its life.

Shadow Bolter (B) **Level 5 Artillery**
Small shadow humanoid, dark one

HP 50; **Bloodied** 25 **Initiative** +6
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +9
Speed 6 Darkvision

Traits

Combat Advantage (necrotic)
Whenever the shadow bolter hits a creature granting combat advantage to it, the bolter deals 5 extra necrotic damage, and each of that creature's adjacent allies takes 5 necrotic damage.

Deadly Precision
The shadow bolter's ranged attacks have combat advantage against any enemy that the bolter's allies are flanking.

Standard Actions

Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage.

Black Bolt (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes 5 damage each time it provokes an opportunity attack (save ends).

Move Actions

Dark Step ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The bolter moves 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks provoked by this movement, and gains combat advantage against each creature that it ends its move adjacent to until the end of the bolter's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Killing Dark
Trigger: The bolter drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): Each enemy adjacent to the bolter is blinded until the end of his or her next turn.

Skills Stealth +11
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment dagger, crossbow, 20 bolts, silk rope (50 ft.), grappling hook

3 Twig Blight Swampvines (T) **Level 3 Soldier**
Small fey humanoid (plant)

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +8
Speed 5 (swamp walk), climb 5, swim 5 Darkvision
Resist 5 poison; **Vulnerable** 5 fire

Traits

Rooted
When an effect forces the swampvine to move through a pull, a push, or a slide, the seedling can move 3 squares fewer than the effect specifies.

Standard Actions

Claw (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 poison damage.

Minor Actions

Vine Snare ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Melee 3 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: The swampvine pulls the target up to 2 squares, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 13).

Triggered Actions

Poison Lash (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy the swampvine is grabbing uses an attack power that does not include the swampvine as a target.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Melee 3 (triggering enemy). The target takes 5 poison damage.

Skills Stealth +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 10 (+1) **Int** 6 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Elven

Session 9: Vontarin's Wrath

The creeping dread of the Shadowfell holds sway over the town of Duponde for a second night. Once again, the shadows are full of unsettling phantoms, sinister presences, and roaming monsters. During this session, the townspeople reach the end of their endurance just as Vontarin unleashes an attack against Duponde. When you're ready, read:

You've already dealt with one threat tonight, but dawn is still hours away. Most of the townsfolk are gathered in a few defensible spots—the chapel, the lady's manor, or the old armory. Since the marshal's men are stretched thin, you're helping patrol the town while they guard the townspeople taking refuge.

Consequences

Depending on what the players did in Session 8, they might gain a small edge in this session.

Rat Pack: Among the people sheltering at the armory are Tilda, Harald, and the three dwarves from the Old Owl. If the characters fought the rats, Tilda is grateful for their struggle to protect the Old Owl. She aids the characters as they try to fight off despair and rally the people at the armory, granting a +2 bonus to checks in the skill challenge.

Lonely Death: If the characters instead searched the town, they prevent the dark one from reporting back to Vontarin before he sends his monsters against the town. Lacking knowledge of the town's defenses, Vontarin diverts a troop of skeletons from the main attack to search the town. No skeleton reinforcements appear in the encounter. If characters learned of the impending attack from the dark one and use that information to influence townsfolk, they gain a +2 bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidate checks in the skill challenge.

Shadow's Influence

Monsters that roam the Shadowfell are trouble enough, but the plane of shadow holds a more insidious peril—pervasive, soul-crushing despair and hopelessness that slowly saps the will of those who are exposed to it. As hours pass and Duponde sinks deeper into the Shadowfell, the malaise slowly deprives every living soul caught in the town of the will to fight on. Over the course of their watch, the characters come to realize that they have to do something to fight off the creeping despair, for themselves and for the townspeople around them.

Skill Challenge: Creeping Despair

The skill challenge begins when the characters have been on patrol for a short while. As the night wears on, a pervasive hopelessness settles over the townsfolk. Characters feel a growing numbness and weariness. People fall silent and stare ahead as if in a bleak trance. If more monsters appear, the citizens might not be able to defend themselves.

Level: 2

Complexity: 2 (6 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Arcana, Diplomacy, Endurance, Heal, Insight, Intimidate, Religion, Thievery

Arcana or Thievery (DC 13): The character raises spirits by entertaining others with small feats of legerdemain or amusing cantrips.

Diplomacy (DC 13): The character urges the guards and townspeople to fight the despair or otherwise keeps the crowd amused.

Endurance (DC 13; group check): The characters force themselves to remain active. Each character attempts this Endurance check. The party gains one success if at least half the characters succeed.

Heal (DC 13): The character cooks up a stimulating hot food or beverage.

Insight (DC 20): The character identifies those in the greatest danger of surrendering to despair and suggests reasons for those people to feel hopeful.

Intimidate (DC 13): The character shakes observers out of despondency by describing the danger of the situation and the need for bravery.

Religion (DC 9): The character leads the people in hymns or prayers that help to stave off the despair.

Success: Characters successfully endure. They rally and inspire the guards, who participate fully in Encounter 9.

Failure: Despair claims victory. The guards do not participate in Encounter 9, and each character is dazed until the end of his or her first turn in the encounter. If you are using the Despair Deck, have each player draw a card from the deck. Instead of a character being dazed at the start of the encounter, he or she is affected by the card.

Vontarin's Soldiers

The ghost possessing Nathaire has ignored Duponde until now. Some of his dark ones are spying on the town, but the monsters roaming the streets are threats indigenous to this portion of the Shadowfell. After the Creeping Despair skill challenge concludes, Vontarin unleashes his first deliberate attack. He animates skeletons from the crypts beneath Saint Avarthil Monastery and orders them to attack the town, hoping to drive away any people lingering in Duponde. Go to the **Vontarin's Horde** encounter.

Vontarin's Horde

Encounter Level 3

Before the encounter starts, read:

As you come to the Town Square, completing another round of your patrol, a cry goes up in the direction of the armory. In the distance, you can see bone-white forms surrounding the building.

Setup

8–12 decrepit skeletons (D)
2 blazing skeletons (B)
1 shadow stalker (S)
4–6 Duponde Guards (allies)

The characters can hasten to intercept the skeletons before they break into the armory. Do not place the shadow stalker when you set up the encounter unless the heroes spot them. It requires a DC 20 Perception check to spot the shadow stalkers.

Tactics

Blazing Skeletons: These undead fight with more intelligence. Each uses *flame orb*, targeting those who seem to pose a serious threat. They avoid catching allies in their fiery aura.

Decrepit Skeletons: Four decrepit skeletons position themselves as artillery, using their shortbows. The rest engage in melee, employing their longswords.

Shadow Stalker: This creature waits for the characters to spread out, picks a target to attack, and uses *shadow stalk* to enter the fight. As long as *shadow stalk* lasts, the shadow attacks its victim with *shadowy touch*. If the target saves, the shadow flits back into concealment and hides again.

Development

Guards: Depending on the party's success in this session's skill challenge, the guards might be cooperative or despondent. If the guards are despondent, they take no actions, raising no hand to defend anyone, including themselves. If characters' efforts have rallied the guards, allow each player to control one guard in the fight. A player-controlled guard acts just after that player's character in the initiative order.

Reinforcements: If the characters defeated the dark one in the Lonely Death encounter, nothing further happens in this encounter. Otherwise, when the characters destroy four decrepit skeletons or one blazing skeleton, four additional decrepit skeletons join the battle. They appear at the edge of the map, near the square marked R.

Features of the Area

Illumination: It's dark. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

Aqueduct: The water is 5 feet below the level of the street, and it is 10 feet deep. No check is required to swim, but each square requires 2 extra squares of movement. Characters in the water must use a move action and succeed on a DC 12 Athletics check to climb from the water up to the street.

Bridges: The highest level of each arched bridge is 10 feet above the water of the aqueduct.

Cart: The bed of the cart is 3 feet above the street. Moving into the cart requires 1 extra square of movement.

Doors: The doors leading into the armory (the central building) are damaged and no longer lock. Other doors are locked. It requires a DC 12 Thievery check to pick a lock or a DC 19 Athletics check to force open a door.

Furniture and Goods: These squares are difficult terrain.

Roof: The roof of the armory is 20 feet high, and unlike the surrounding buildings, it is flat.

Stairway: These stairs are difficult terrain. They lead to the armory's upper floor (currently filled with citizens of Duponde).

Statues: The statues at the foot of each bridge are blocking terrain.

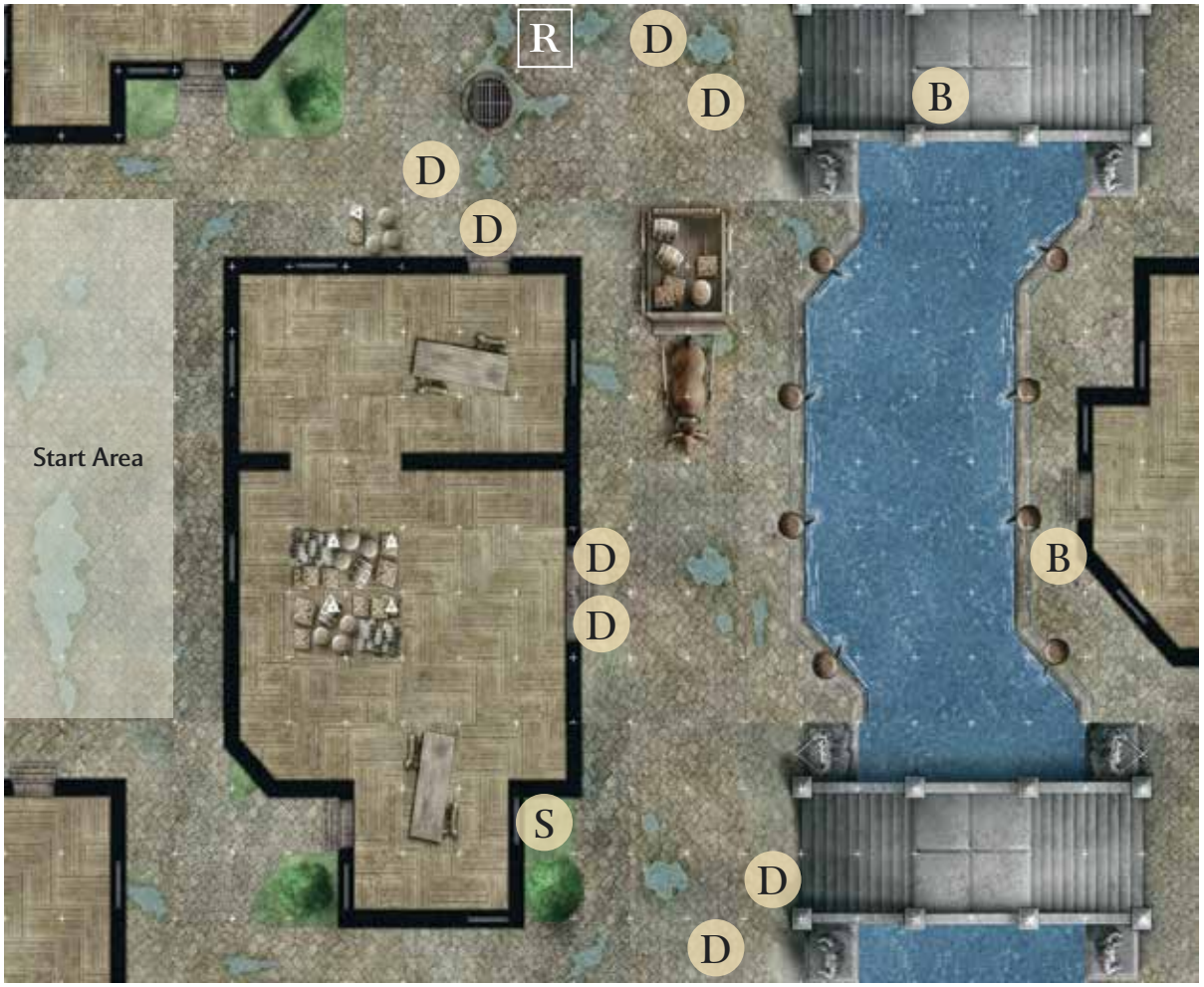
Tables: These squares are difficult terrain.

Windows: The armory windows are 5 feet above the street outside. Bars cover each window, which is about 1 foot wide and 4 feet tall.

Conclusion

When the characters defeat the skeleton force, they notice each decrepit skeleton is dressed in the tattered brown robes of a friar. No one nearby knows the significance of the finding. This is a mystery for the next session.

Daybreak is at hand. The town shifts from the Shadowfell back to the world. However, the characters



notice that the town's return seems sluggish, as though the Shadowfell is clinging to Duponde.

Reward

For battling the monsters, facing the skill challenge, and helping to defend the town, each character receives 300 XP. If a player has attended every session this season, his or her character should have 2,250 XP if the character has completed all possible quests. That character now advances to level 3.

2 Blazing Skeletons (B) **Level 5 Artillery**
Medium natural animate (undead)

HP 53; **Bloodied** 26 **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 fire, 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

☼ **Fiery Aura** (fire) ✦ **Aura** 1
Any creature that ends its turn in the aura takes 5 fire damage.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Blazing Claw** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

⊛ **Flame Orb** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d4 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+0)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Shadow Stalker (S) **Level 3 Lurker**
Medium shadow humanoid

HP 25; **Bloodied** 12 **Initiative** +9
AC 15, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14 **Perception** +3
Speed 8 Darkvision
Vulnerable 5 radiant

Traits

Insubstantial
The shadow stalker takes half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force or radiant damage. Whenever the shadow stalker takes radiant damage, it loses this trait until the start of its next turn.

Born of Shadows
The stalker can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has concealment instead of needing total concealment.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shadowy Touch** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + 6 necrotic damage.

⸸ **Shadow Stalk** (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** when the stalker uses *shadow step*
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 8 necrotic damage, and the stalker shifts into the target's space and melds with its shadow (save ends). While so melded with the target's shadow, it moves when the target moves without provoking opportunity attacks, and it gains a +4 bonus to all defenses and a +5 bonus to attack rolls against the target. When the target saves, the stalker shifts to a square adjacent to the target.

Triggered Actions

Shadow Step (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: A living creature within 5 squares of the stalker drops to 0 hit points or fewer.
Effect (Free Action): The stalker teleports to a square adjacent to the triggering creature and gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

Skills Stealth +10
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 19 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Alignment evil

12 Decrepit Skeletons (D) **Level 1 Minion**
Skirmisher
Medium natural animate (undead)

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +5
AC 16, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 **Perception** +2
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Standard Actions

⊕ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The skeleton can shift 1 square before the attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 4 damage.

⊛ **Shortbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The skeleton can shift 1 square before the attack.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 3 damage.

Str 15 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+2)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 3 (-4) **Cha** 3 (-4)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –
Equipment longsword, shortbow, 20 arrows

Duponde Guard (G3) **Level 1 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid, human

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊕ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 4 damage.

⊛ **Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 3 damage.

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 11 (+0)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Equipment chainmail, longsword, crossbow, 20 bolts

Chapter 3

The encounters in this chapter assume the characters are 3rd level. If most of your group is 1st or 2nd level, see **Adjusting the Encounters**. Each character has had an extended rest and should have full hit points and healing surges, as well as 1 action point and access to his or her daily powers.

Despair Deck: If you are using this component, have each player draw a card from the Despair Deck. A player's card affects his or her character.

Session 10: Saint Avarthil's Crypts

During another night in the Shadowfell in the previous two sessions, the characters fought off a major attack Vontarin sent against the town. Begin this session by reading:

After the shadows slowly relinquished Duponde at daybreak, you rested for several hours. Grimbold comes to see you early in the afternoon. "I heard about your defense of the armory," he begins. "That was well done, my friends. I was at the chapel last night. We lost a number of people to those skeletons. It's strange. The skeletons we fought were dressed in the cassocks of monks. Brother Zelan thinks they came from the crypts at Saint Avarthil Monastery."

Grimbold explains that Saint Avarthil's is a large, ruined abbey a few hours west of Duponde. Badly damaged during the legendary duel between Vontarin and Evard, the monastery was never completely repaired. Its last residents, Pelorite friars, abandoned it thirty or forty years ago. Grimbold can provide the characters with directions to the old abbey.

Remind the players that their characters found a bronze seal broken in the cellars of Vontarin's house. That seal has a prayer to Pelor on it. One of the characters might deduce the connection to the abbey immediately.

If the players don't pick up on the suggestion that they should go investigate the ruins, Grimbold asks the characters to do so. The marshal wants to make sure that no more skeletons emerge from the abbey crypts. He also points out that it seems likely that someone disturbed the crypts or animated the skeletons—someone like Nathaire.

Where is Nathaire?

During daylight hours, the possessed mage is still in the Shadowfell analogue of Saint Avarthil Monastery. If the characters were so inclined, they can explore every inch of the abbey grounds without encountering him. However, some of Vontarin's cronies are in the world. Encounters 10 and 11 take place during the remaining hours of daylight, while Nathaire is still trapped in the Shadowfell.

After sunset, the monastery slips back into the Shadowfell. Nathaire resumes his search of the library, where the characters can confront him in Encounter 12. Any captured dark ones in the following encounters can tell the characters about Nathaire and the library.

Road to the Abbey

When the characters set out to investigate Saint Avarthil Monastery, begin with:

The road leading west from Duponde passes into an area of low, heavily wooded hills overlooking the White River. After traveling for a few hours, you catch a glimpse of a large, ruined abbey on a hilltop above the waterway. Most of its roof has fallen in, and the bell tower is little more than a jagged stump.

A wide wagon-track leads up from the river road to the abbey. Nearly a hundred yards from the gate, another path splits off, leading to the foot of the bluffs facing the river. Here you find a doorway cut into the cliff—the entrance to the crypts, its large bronze doors open. The stylized sun on the doors reminds you of the broken seal you found in the cellars of Vontarin's ruined mansion.

Crypt Entrance

Vontarin's servants are inside the crypts, busy with the work of opening sarcophagi and preparing skeletons for animation when their master returns.

Perception (DC 15): The hard-packed ground outside the doors holds several tracks. It shows that the crypt doors were recently opened for the first time in a very long while. Numerous skeletal feet shuffled out of the crypt after it was opened. On a result of 20 or higher, the character also notices the tracks of small, two-legged creatures with feet like cloven hooves (dark ones). These creatures entered and left the crypt several times.

Illumination: Bronze braziers in each chamber of the crypt hold cool fires equivalent to everburning torches, providing bright light in the whole crypt. Describe the braziers as part of the scene. If removed from the crypts, a brazier's magic fails.

North Crypt

Remains of Pelor worshipers whose deeds earned them a special place rest in these crypts.

A stern angel statue watches over the room. Burial niches, plastered over and marked with corroded bronze nameplates, line the walls. A large number of niches have been broken open, leaving small piles of plaster at the foot of each wall. Two sarcophagi also rest in this room—one bears the carved image of a well-dressed merchant, the other a robed lady. To the east, a rubble-choked stairway descends to a larger chamber.

Dozens of burial niches line the walls, stacked five high from floor to ceiling. Each is about 3 feet deep, 2 feet tall, and 6 feet long. Most are empty, since this room is the first place Nathaire's servants began to gather skeletons. A sharp blow is sufficient to poke a hole in an unopened niche. Nothing but dusty bones dressed in rotted brown robes remains within each one.

Animated skeletons guard the room. Go to the **Shadowed Crypts** encounter. Use the descriptions on this page when the characters move to other rooms.

Middle Chamber

Another statue in the shape of a harsh angelic guardian watches over this room, which also contains a well brimming with dark water.

The well in this chamber captures a small spring. Its water is cold and drinkable, and it is blessed by Pelor. A good-aligned character who drinks from the water gains a +1 bonus to all defenses until the end of his or her next encounter. The water loses its blessing if it is carried away from the well.

South Crypt

Like the north crypt, this room was used to inter the remains of lay people who served Pelor.

This crypt, another stern angel statue watching over it, contains more plastered burial niches. Most of them are unopened. One tomb in the room's center shows a lady knight in armor, and the other depicts a lord in regal robes. Steps descend to the east into a larger chamber.

This chamber is very much like the north crypt, except that only a few of the burial niches have been broken open. Most are still sealed.

More animated skeletons guard this room; see the **Shadowed Crypts** encounter.

Great Crypt

The most important monks are buried here.

Two flights of stairs descend to this burial chamber. Four pillars were meant to support the vaulted ceiling, but one has fallen. Several sarcophagi that have lids carved into the images of robed priests in repose occupy the room's center. Two of the tombs are open, and one shattered lid lies on the floor. A row of smaller sarcophagi lines the back wall, each stone coffin beneath an angel statue. Piles of rubble mark places where ceiling or walls have collapsed, and a crevasse divides the room in two.

A blazing skeleton guards this room. Two dark ones who serve the possessed Nathaire work to prepare more skeletons here. The open sarcophagi contain their handiwork.

Shadowed Crypts

Encounter Level 3

Setup

2 hex knights (K)
1 blazing skeleton (B)
8 decrepit skeletons (D)

A battle starts as soon as the characters attract the attention of the skeletons. Place monsters only in areas characters can see. From the crypt entrance, characters can see down into the great crypt only if they move to a square adjacent to the steps leading down.

When the characters enter, read:
A couple of skeletons in faded brown cassocks stand here, each gripping a rusty longsword. They raise their swords and advance the instant they see you.

Tactics

The dark ones in the great crypt have command of the skeletons.

Blazing Skeleton: This creature moves just close enough to attack at range with *flame orb*. It prefers to remain in the great crypt, where it can attack any target on the steps or in squares adjacent to the top of the steps.

Hex Knights: These creatures hold their positions, using *hand crossbow* in preference to melee attacks as long as the characters aren't in the great crypt. As soon as an enemy sets foot in the great crypt, the hex knights advance to meet that foe. They use *dark step* to close the distance, and then attack with *short sword* unless two enemies are adjacent, in which case they use *vicious flurry*. The hex knights use *dark step* to escape tough enemies and go after weaker ones.

Decrepit Skeletons: Quarters are cramped in the upper crypts, so the decrepit skeletons close to attack with their swords. They attack the nearest intruder each round.

Features of the Area

Braziers: These bronze containers are difficult terrain.

Crevasse: This large crevasse is 10 feet wide and 20 feet deep. The sides are rough but steep and require a DC 13 Athletics check to climb.

Doors: The doors in this area are made of corroded bronze plates. They are unlocked.

Rubble: Debris-strewn squares are difficult terrain.

Sarcophagi: These tombs are difficult terrain.

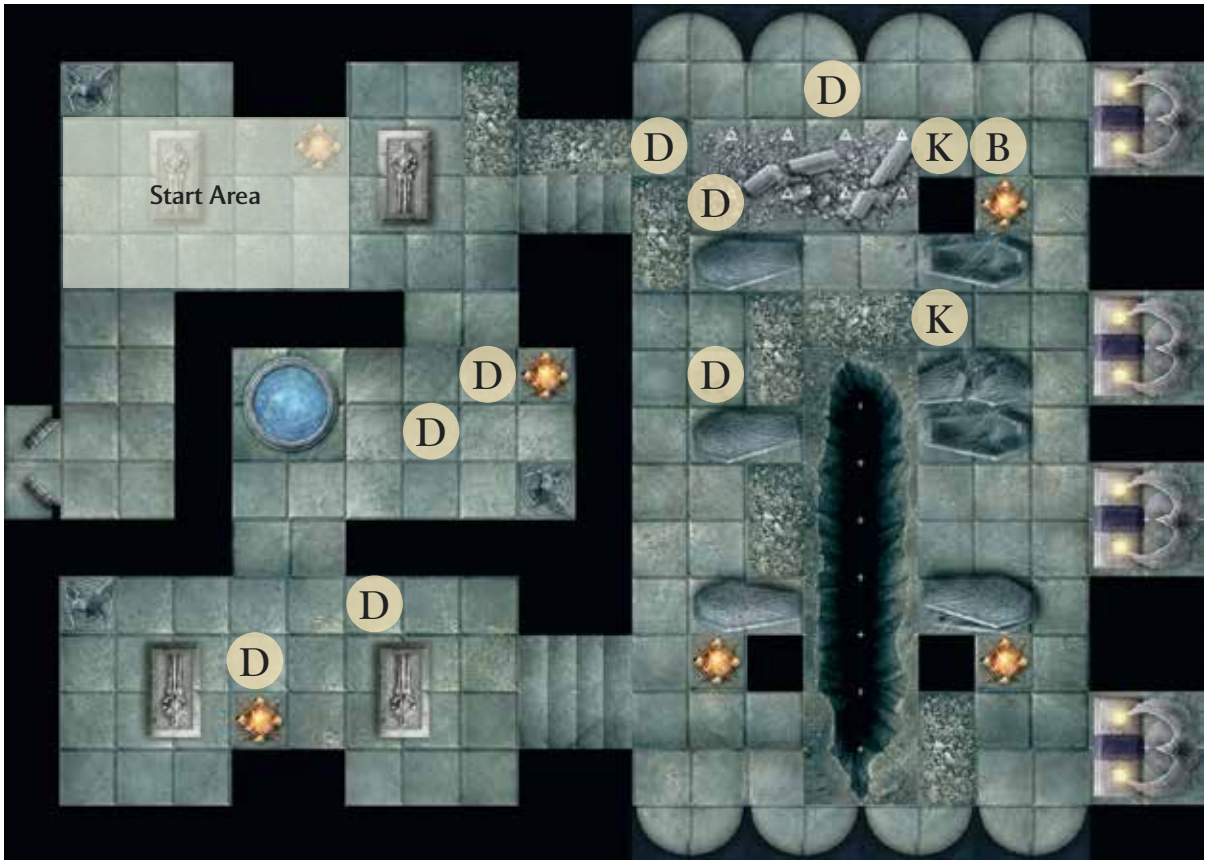
Statues: The figures are blocking terrain.

Well: A 2-foot wall around this pool keeps it contained. The water is 15 feet deep.

Conclusion

A dark one, if captured, can tell the characters that Nathaire (Vontarin) is trapped in the Shadowfell during the day and searches the abbey's library by night. They can also inform the characters that more of Vontarin's servants are searching the ruins.

If the heroes dispatch the dark ones without interrogation, you can have the party find instructions written by Vontarin that relate the same information.



Tools: The dark ones have crowbars and other mundane tools they have been using to open the burial niches.

Reward

For exploring all the rooms of the crypt and battling the monsters, each character gains 250 XP.

Treasure: The middle sarcophagus of the eastern row is finely decorated, and the lid shows signs that it has been opened recently. A substantial treasure is hidden within. Several small sacks contain 1,000 sp, 140 gp, a blue topaz (100 gp), a fine silver ring with small emeralds (250 gp), and a *+1 amulet of health*.

If the party refuses to open the tomb for fear of desecrating it, Pelor provides his blessing to one of the characters. One character gains a +1 enhancement bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will until the end of this season. Use the normal rules for determining which character receives a magic item, preferring characters who were against opening the tomb.

Blazing Skeleton (B) **Level 5 Artillery**
Medium natural animate (undead)

HP 53; **Bloodied** 26 **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 fire, 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

☼ **Fiery Aura** (fire) ✦ **Aura** 1
Any creature that ends its turn in the aura takes 5 fire damage.

Standard Actions

⨺ **Blazing Claw** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

➴ **Flame Orb** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d4 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Str 13 (+3)	**Dex** 18 (+6)	**Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 17 (+5)	**Int** 4 (-1)	**Cha** 6 (+0)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

8 Decrepit Skeletons (D) **Level 1 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium natural animate (undead)

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +5
AC 16, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 **Perception** +2
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic

Standard Actions

⨺ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The skeleton can shift 1 square before the attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 4 damage.

➴ **Shortbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The skeleton can shift 1 square before the attack.
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 3 damage.

Str 15 (+2)	**Dex** 17 (+3)	**Wis** 14 (+2)
Con 13 (+1)	**Int** 3 (-4)	**Cha** 3 (-4)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –
Equipment longsword, shortbow, 20 arrows

2 Hex Knights (K) **Level 4 Soldier**
Small shadow humanoid, dark one

HP 54; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative** +7
AC 20, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +3
Speed 6 Darkvision

Standard Actions

⨺ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The hex knight makes the following attack twice.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the hex knight's next turn.

➴ **Hand Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.

⨺ **Vicious Flurry** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Melee 1 (one or two creatures); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both).

Move Actions

Dark Step ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The hex knight moves 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks provoked by this movement, and gains combat advantage against each creature that it ends its move adjacent to until the end of the hex knight's next turn.

Minor Actions

Shadow Hex ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: One creature within 3 squares of the hex knight is marked until the end of the encounter or until the hex knight uses *shadow hex* again. While the creature is marked by the hex knight, whenever it makes an attack that does not include the hex knight as a target, it grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.

Triggered Actions

Killing Dark
Trigger: The hex knight drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): Each enemy adjacent to the hex knight is blinded until the end of his or her next turn.

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +10

Str 15 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+5)	**Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 11 (+2)	**Cha** 11 (+2)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment hide armor, 2 short swords, hand crossbow, 10 bolts

Session 11: Abbey Grounds

After dealing with the dark ones and skeletons lurking in the abbey crypts in Session 10, the characters are finally closing in on the possessed Nathaire. However, the ruins of Saint Avarthil Monastery cover a lot of ground, and monsters loyal to Vontarin's ghost still lurk in the shadows.

When you're ready to begin, read:

You've left the crypts, which are cut from the rocky bluff at the foot of the abbey walls. The ruined abbey stands on a hilltop overlooking the White River. Dozens of outbuildings and rambling walls descend from the hilltop. Smaller chapels, dormitories, refectories, and storehouses are within the crumbling walls. In its day, Saint Avarthil Monastery must have been a small town in its own right. Now, wild thickets and stands of young trees cover much of the open space and grow through several ruined buildings. The main structure is the largest feature of the sprawling grounds.

Previously, you discovered a pack of undead and two strange humanoids within the crypt, but no sign of Nathaire. You know he has been at work here, and nightfall approaches.

What do you do?

Allow the players to consider the situation and discuss their plans. If they questioned the dark ones in Encounter 10, they know to search the abbey grounds. Here are a few options:

Search the Grounds: If the characters try to look around the abbey's grounds, go to the Search the Grounds section.

Check out the Abbey: If the characters investigate the largest and most prominent ruin, the abbey itself, go to Explore the Abbey.

Rest, Set Ambush, or Wait: The players might decide to wait for sunset, to set an ambush at the crypt entrance, or to just wait before doing anything else. In any of these cases, go to Wait for Sunset.

Wait for Sunset

Nothing happens near the abbey crypts for the rest of the afternoon.

As the sun disappears below the horizon, you feel the same gut-twisting lurch from the shadowfall that you've experienced over the last two nights. Preternatural gloom quickly descends over the ruins. Thickets and trees now seem sinister, and the leaning walls take on a brooding, ominous aspect.

If the characters go search the abbey grounds, see Search the Grounds. If the party keeps waiting, add:

A couple of hours after sunset, a small blast and faint flicker of fire briefly come from the ruins on the hilltop. Distant hissing laughter drifts down and dies away. That flash came from near the outbuildings and walls to the south of the abbey proper.

Tar devils entertain themselves by burning small animals in the ruins. This is what the characters saw and heard from a distance. When the characters investigate, go to the **Defiled Shrine** encounter. Because it's after dark, the characters have to carry lights to see clearly. Monsters in Encounter 11 notice lights approaching their location. Treat this situation as if the characters failed the skill challenge.

Explore the Abbey

Since the main abbey is the most prominent ruin in the area, the characters might decide to investigate it directly rather than poke around in the outbuildings. When the party does so, read:

The abbey ruins contain only mounds of rubble from the collapsed roof and barren walls preserving the skeletal outline of the grand building that once stood here. Thick stands of black trees and tangled masses of briars choke the abbey grounds, but you can still make out the paved footpaths winding from building to building within the crumbling walls.

The only monsters present in this area are at the southern gate (see Encounter 11), which isn't close to these ruins. Encourage the players to search the grounds or wait for sunset.

Search the Grounds

A large number of outbuildings and walls surround the abbey. Some dark ones and their infernal guards are holed up in a small shrine near the abbey's south gate, but finding the monsters takes time. If the characters aren't careful, they might stumble into an ambush.

When the characters finish the skill challenge, go to the **Defiled Shrine** encounter.

Skill Challenge: Searching

The skill challenge begins when the characters set out to search the grounds. The forest has grown over much of the old monastery, choking the crumbling walls with undergrowth and trees. Scores of places are apparent that might make good hiding places for Nathaire or his lackeys. It might take hours to thoroughly search the grounds, so it's best to do so before sunset.

Level: 3

Complexity: 2 (6 successes before 4 failures); each success takes the party ever southward toward the southern gate.

Primary Skills: Arcana, Athletics, Nature, Perception, Stealth, Religion

Arcana (DC 13; trained only): The character uses second sight to detect traces of shadow or identify the leavings of the fiends in Encounter 11.

Athletics (DC 21): The character can scramble to a wall top or scale a broken tower to gain a better vantage point. He or she spots something useful, such as fresh tar or a slain animal.

Perception (DC 13): The character looks for tracks and other signs of monsters hiding in the area. A glimpse of motion or the finding of strange, hooflike footprints leads the party onward.

Nature (DC 13): The character looks for signs of habitation—birds chirping in some areas but not others, animal burrows or dens that have been abandoned, or damaged foliage.

Stealth (DC 13; group check): Characters try to keep their noise to a minimum to listen better and avoid giving away their presence. Each attempts a Stealth check. The party gains one success if at least half the characters succeed.

Religion (DC 9): The character uses familiarity with religious settlements to identify various buildings and make informed guesses about the layout of the ruins.

Success: Characters discover the monsters in Encounter 11, spotting the dark ones and the devils before the encounter begins. The monsters are surprised at the start of the encounter.

Failure: The party blunders into an ambush in Encounter 11. The characters are surprised at the start of the encounter.

Sighting the Library

Characters who searched the grounds start Encounter 11 while the sun still shines. At the end of Encounter 11, the sun sets and the abbey and its grounds shift to the Shadowfell again. If the heroes waited and had to fight in the dark, change the description here to account for the fact that the sun has already set. Otherwise, when the battle ends, read:

Sunset arrives soon after your battle ends. As the sun sinks below the horizon, the abbey and its grounds slide into the Shadowfell with a familiar dizzying sensation. As in Duponde, the transition skews proportions. Ruins nearby take on a crooked, leering aspect, and the woods and thickets grow black and dense.

Not far off, a two-story building that was in ruins a moment ago now seems intact. It might be a chapel or perhaps a library. A glimmer of lantern light shows through the windows of its upper floor.

The characters have finally found Nathaire's hiding place, but the players have to wait until the next session to see what happens.

Defiled Shrine

Encounter Level 3

Setup

2 shadow bolters (B)
2 tar devil brawlers (T)
2 leeching shadows (L)

Nathaire ordered a couple of his dark ones to stand guard by the abbey's southern gate. He provided them with some extra muscle in the form of a pair of summoned tar devils. Place monsters only when a character has line of sight to them. The leeching shadows begin the encounter hidden. Spotting them requires a DC 18 Perception check.

When the encounter starts, read:
An old lane leads to a gate in the abbey walls. A flight of stone steps goes up to a small courtyard, containing a tiny shrine and a dilapidated storehouse. The walls are about 20 feet high on the exterior side, but the battlements on top are crumbling ruins. Narrow windows look out from the wall over the grounds.

If the characters failed the Search the Grounds skill challenge or wait approach in the dark with lights showing, the monsters surprise them.

Characters who succeeded on the skill challenge spot a tar devil crossing the courtyard entrance, and they can surprise the monsters.

Tactics

Serving Vontarin's interests, the tar devils and dark ones are allied. They fiercely defend the gate area. The shadows are predators drawn to the fighting.

Shadow Bolters: The shadow bolters try to remain indoors, sniping with *black bolt* from the windows to take advantage of the cover. They know the layout of the passages, and they go to a window facing the exterior if doing so allows them to snipe at characters outside the shrine.

Leeching Shadows: These creatures wait for the adventurers to fully engage the monsters in the courtyard before slinking out of the trees to attack characters who have no allies nearby.

Tar Devils: These fiends avoid descending the steps to get at characters outside the courtyard; they want to fight so their allies can use ranged attacks. If they must, the tar devils ready actions to charge when the characters reach the courtyard. They use *tar strike* at every opportunity.

Features of the Area

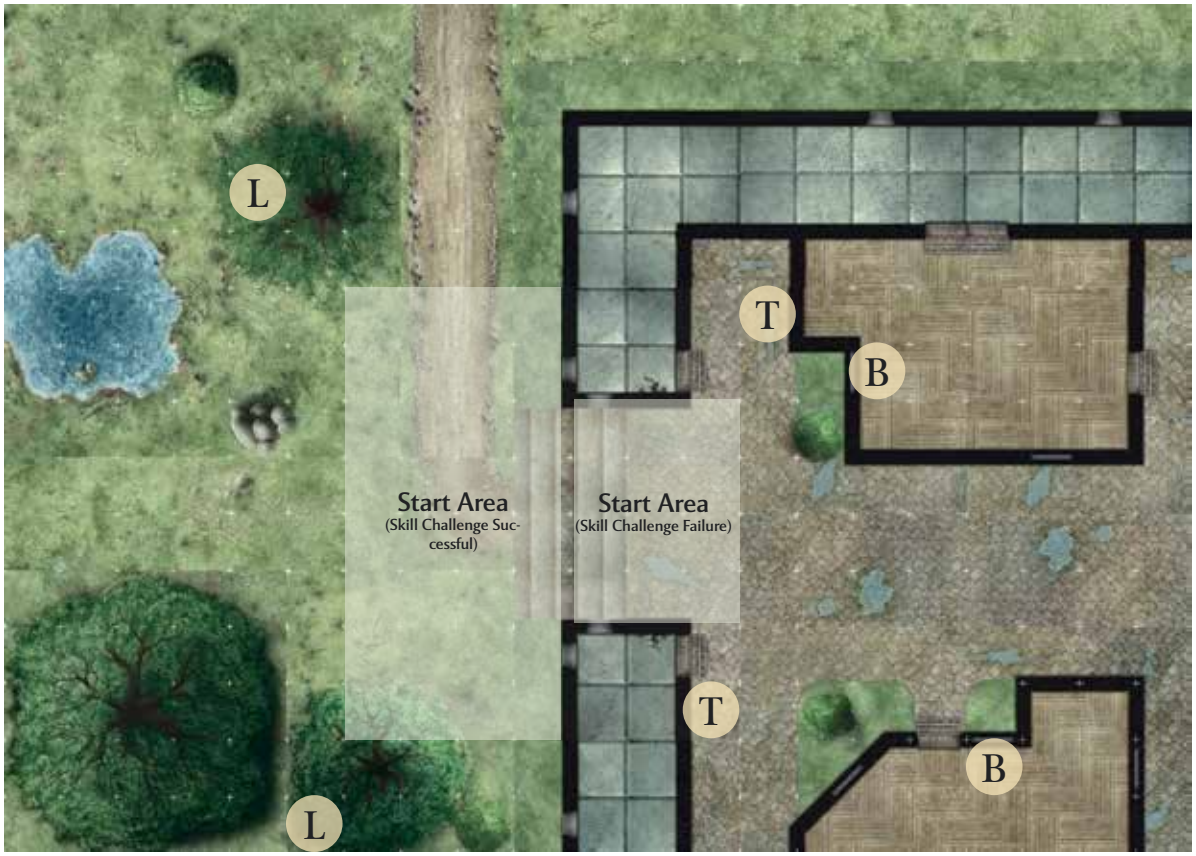
Illumination: Bright light, unless the characters waited for dark.

Doors: These doors are closed, but they are neither locked nor barred.

Pond: This water is difficult terrain.

Steps: The stairway is gradual, offering no impediment to movement.

Trees: A tree trunk's square is difficult terrain. Climbing it requires a DC 8 Athletics check. The smaller trees are about 20 feet tall, and the largest is 30 feet tall.



Walls: This wall—20 feet tall outside, 10 feet tall in the courtyard—is crumbling and covered in slippery moss. It requires a DC 20 Athletics check to climb it. The top of the wall (depicted as intact passages on the map) is difficult terrain.

Windows: These open windows are 2 feet wide and 3 feet tall. Moving through a window requires 3 extra squares of movement and a successful DC 9 Athletics or Acrobatics check.

Conclusion

When the characters are done here, go on to the section Sighting the Library, page 53.

Dark Ones: These creatures, if captured, can tell the characters that Nathaire (Vontarin) is trapped in the Shadowfell during the day and searches the library by night.

Reward

For facing the skill challenge and battling the monsters, each character gains 250 XP.

Treasure: The shadow bolters have been indulging their larcenous tastes, systematically pillaging the place. They have had some success. One of the dark ones carries a pouch, containing 100 sp and 90 gp. The other has a *+1 lifedrinker weapon*. Both also have satchels stuffed with old Pelorite scrolls and tomes. These mundane texts are evidence that the dark ones have spent time pilfering a library in the ruins.

2 Tar Devil Brawler (T) **Level 3 Brute**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)

HP 53; **Bloodied** 26 **Initiative** +4
AC 15, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14 **Perception** +6
Speed 6 Darkvision
Resist 10 fire; **Vulnerable** 5 acid

Traits
Tar Splatter ✦ Aura 1
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura cannot shift during that turn.

Standard Actions
Slam (fire) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 7 fire damage.
Tar Strike (fire) **✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 5 fire damage, and the target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends both).

Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)
Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal

2 Leeching Shadows (L) **Level 1 Minion Lurker**
Small shadow humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +7
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover)

Traits
Born of Shadows
The shadow can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has partial concealment instead of needing total concealment.

Standard Actions
Shadow Meld (necrotic) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4 necrotic damage, and the shadow shifts into the target's space and melds with its shadow (save ends). While so melded, the shadow is removed from play, and the target grants combat advantage and takes ongoing 4 necrotic damage. When the target saves, the shadow reappears in a square adjacent to its target of choice.

Skills Stealth +8
Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+1)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 5 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common

2 Shadow Bolters (B) **Level 5 Artillery**
Small shadow humanoid, dark one

HP 50; **Bloodied** 25 **Initiative** +6
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +9
Speed 6 Darkvision

Traits
Combat Advantage (necrotic)
Whenever the shadow bolter hits a creature granting combat advantage to it, the bolter deals 5 extra necrotic damage, and each of that creature's adjacent allies takes 5 necrotic damage.
Deadly Precision
The shadow bolter's ranged attacks have combat advantage against any enemy that the bolter's allies are flanking.

Standard Actions
Dagger (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage.
Black Bolt (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes 5 damage each time it provokes an opportunity attack (save ends).

Move Actions
Dark Step ✦ At-Will
Effect: The bolter moves 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks provoked by this movement, and gains combat advantage against each creature that it ends its move adjacent to until the end of the bolter's next turn.

Triggered Actions
Killing Dark
Trigger: The bolter drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): Each enemy adjacent to the bolter is blinded until the end of his or her next turn.

Skills Stealth +11
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment dagger, crossbow, 20 bolts

Session 12: Black Library

The characters are finally in the right place at the right time to confront their mysterious quarry. When the Saint Avarthil Monastery shifts back into the Shadowfell at sunset, the old library appears around the missing Nathaire with Vontarin's ghost possessing him.

When you're ready to begin, read:
The cold gloom of the Shadowfell surrounds you once again. A library has formed a short distance away from the small courtyard by the abbey's gates. Faint light flickers in the windows of its upper floor.

Making an Entrance

The library is only a short distance from the courtyard, but the characters have one small hurdle to negotiate before they confront the villain. The have to find a way inside.

Doors: Outer doors are made of sturdy old oak with iron fittings. They are locked. It requires a DC 22 Athletics to break open the doors or a DC 20 Thievery check to pick the lock. Using a heavy piece of masonry or statuary as a battering ram grants a +2 bonus to the Athletics check and allows another character to assist.

Windows: The first floor has no windows. A character can climb the exterior wall to one of the second-floor windows 20 feet up. Doing so requires a DC 21 Athletics check. The windows are a tight squeeze. Entering one requires a DC 9 Athletics or Acrobatics check and 3 squares of movement. Failure by 5 or more causes a character to fall.

Teleport: A character who has a teleportation power can teleport, but it's hard to see inside the library from the ground outside. The roof eaves are 25 feet from the ground. Someone on the roof can hang down and slide into a window (see above).

Knock: If characters bang on the door and ask for admittance, Vontarin directs the shadow bolter to investigate, with a dusk beast as backup. The dark one asks who's there without opening the door. If the characters can persuade the creature that they wish only to talk to Vontarin, the dark one admits them.

Nathaire or Vontarin?

When the characters make their way inside the library, read the following:

Huge bookshelves and tattered purple curtains divide the interior, which bronze lanterns light with weak but steady flames. In the south wall, a staircase winds up to the second floor, which forms a balcony above.

Living shadows in the shape of reptilian beasts prowl the floor among the bookshelves. On the upper floor, a man stands by the balcony rail. You recognize him as the wizard Nathaire, whom you met at the Old Owl, but his eyes are completely black. A purple crystal orb swirling with weird energy rests in a holster on his hip.

If the characters didn't surprise Nathaire and his servants, he addresses them before combat begins:

"That's far enough. You must be the ones my spies told me about," Nathaire says with a cold smile. His voice vibrates like two different voices combined. "I have no particular wish to destroy you, strangers. You are prisoners of that thrice-cursed villain Evard, just as I am. None of you have a chance to escape his trap if you interfere with me now."

If the characters speak with Vontarin, they find he carries himself as an aristocrat, expecting some amount of deference and common courtesy. Beneath his veneer of good manners is a cold, arrogant heart filled with the burning drive to keep his stolen body and escape Evard's curse. He hopes to persuade the characters to leave him be, casting Evard as the grand villain of the story.

SYMBOL OF DAWN

If the characters obtained the holy symbol from Brother Zelan in Session 4, they find that the item glows brightly as this encounter starts, inspiring the characters with hope, and dazing Nathaire. Each character gains a +2 bonus to saving throws during the encounter, and Nathaire starts the encounter dazed (save ends).

Vontarin is proud, and he reacts poorly to any insolence. He has also spent a long time in shadow, which has warped his emotions. A character who insults him provokes an immediate attack. The ghost mage also lashes out if it becomes clear that the characters can't be persuaded to stand aside.

Vontarin knows everything covered in the Adventure Background. He also believes he can break Evard's curse by crafting a counter-ritual once he retrieves his spellbooks and implements. Some specific replies Vontarin might give to the characters include:

Are you Nathaire? Or Vontarin? *"This body is Nathaire's, but I am its master now. I am Vontarin, sometimes called the Gray Hand. I am a student of the necromantic arts, which allowed me to preserve my existence—after a fashion—when Evard defeated me."*

You attacked Duponde! *"The Shadowfell is full of monsters. I have no doubt some of them wander into Duponde when the town transitions to the plane of shadow. That, of course, is Evard's curse and is not my doing. If you're referring to the good friars of Saint Avarthil's, well, it seemed wise to make sure the folk of Duponde fear me enough not to interfere with my plans. Consider it a sharp warning to stay out of my path. I'll be finished with this place soon enough."*

What's important about the abbey? *"The good friars of Saint Avarthil's apparently took it into their heads to remove my spellbooks and arcane devices from my manor after my death. I am looking for my belongings here."*

We have to put your ghost back in your corpse to end Evard's curse. *"Hmm. That might work, but I reject that course. I much prefer life, thank you. Once I escape this shadowy prison, I'm sure the curse will fail."*

Insight (DC 16): Vontarin isn't sure at all. He cares only about escaping the Shadowfell.

You stole Nathaire's body. *"Well, the young fool shouldn't have meddled with magic he didn't understand. I can hardly give it back, since his soul has already departed. I'm the only one in here, I'm afraid."*

Die, monster! *"Death has no hold over me, you fools! Slay this body if you think you can! I'll soon find another!"*

When Vontarin flies into a rage or determines he can't persuade the characters to leave him to his work, or when the characters decide to attack him, combat begins. Go to the **Nathaire at Bay** encounter.

Vontarin's Defeat

When Nathaire's body is killed, Vontarin's ghost is instantly drawn back to the mysterious purple orb at his belt. Read the following:

As Nathaire's body falls, dark mist suddenly streams out of his eyes, ears, and mouth, taking on a twisted humanoid shape. But, then, the strange orb at the wizard's belt flashes with a sinister purple light. The misty figure lets out a howl of rage, and it is then drawn instantly into the purple orb. It seems the orb has trapped Vontarin's ghost.

If players want to break the orb or otherwise take immediate action, tell them they have to wait until the next session. Dealing with the orb and its trapped ghost is the challenge of Session 13.

WHAT ABOUT THE REAL NATHAIRE?

At your option, the real Nathaire might survive his encounter with the characters, proving that Vontarin lied about Nathaire's soul departing the body. If a character knocks Nathaire unconscious instead of killing him, or if a character succeeds on a DC 13 Heal check at the end of the encounter, you can allow Nathaire to be stabilized. Nathaire can fulfill the role of Mother Grivelda in Session 13, telling the characters what they need to know to break the curse. He is too weak from his ordeal to help break the curse or fight the ghost, and he has learned some humility from the experience. He defends his actions, truthfully stating that he never intended ill to befall Duponde. The party can decide how to deal with him. He is not above bribing the characters to spare him. He suggests that if the characters accompany him to Sarthel after the curse is broken, he can deliver on his promise.

Nathaire at Bay

Encounter Level 4

Setup

4 dusk beasts (D)
1 shadow bolter (B)
Nathaire, possessed mage (N)

The shadow bolter is hidden at the start of the encounter. A character must succeed on a DC 21 Perception check to spot it. Unless the shadow bolter lets the characters into the library, it stays hidden while characters converse with Nathaire.

If the characters are inside the library, they set up just inside the inner doors. That's as far as they get before Nathaire addresses them.

When combat begins, read:
Nathaire's eyes flash with dark fury. He snatches the orb from his belt and points a finger at you, conjuring a bolt of black energy. Dusk beasts prowling the library snarl and attack.

Tactics

The dusk beasts and dark one are extremely loyal to Nathaire (Vontarin). They give their lives to protect him.

Shadow Bolter: The shadow bolter lurks in the north end of the library's ground floor, looking for chances to attack characters who are already flanked to gain the best use of *deadly precision*.

Dusk Beasts: These creatures attack the nearest characters. The dusk beast on the upper floor stays near the top of the staircase, guarding against characters climbing up from below. If a character makes it to the balcony anyway, the creature abandons its post and comes to Nathaire's aid.

Nathaire: Nathaire remains on the balcony and uses *shadow tendril* to attack enemies on the ground floor. If caught in melee, Nathaire uses *enervation*, calls for help from the nearest dusk beast, and uses *dark imperative* to bring his allies to him. He tries slide enemies off the balcony.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Outside the library, it's dark. Inside, bronze wall lamps provide bright light.

Balcony: The upper floor is 15 feet above the lower. A rail guards the open edge and provides a +2 bonus to saving throws to avoid falling off the balcony.

Chairs and Desks: These are difficult terrain.

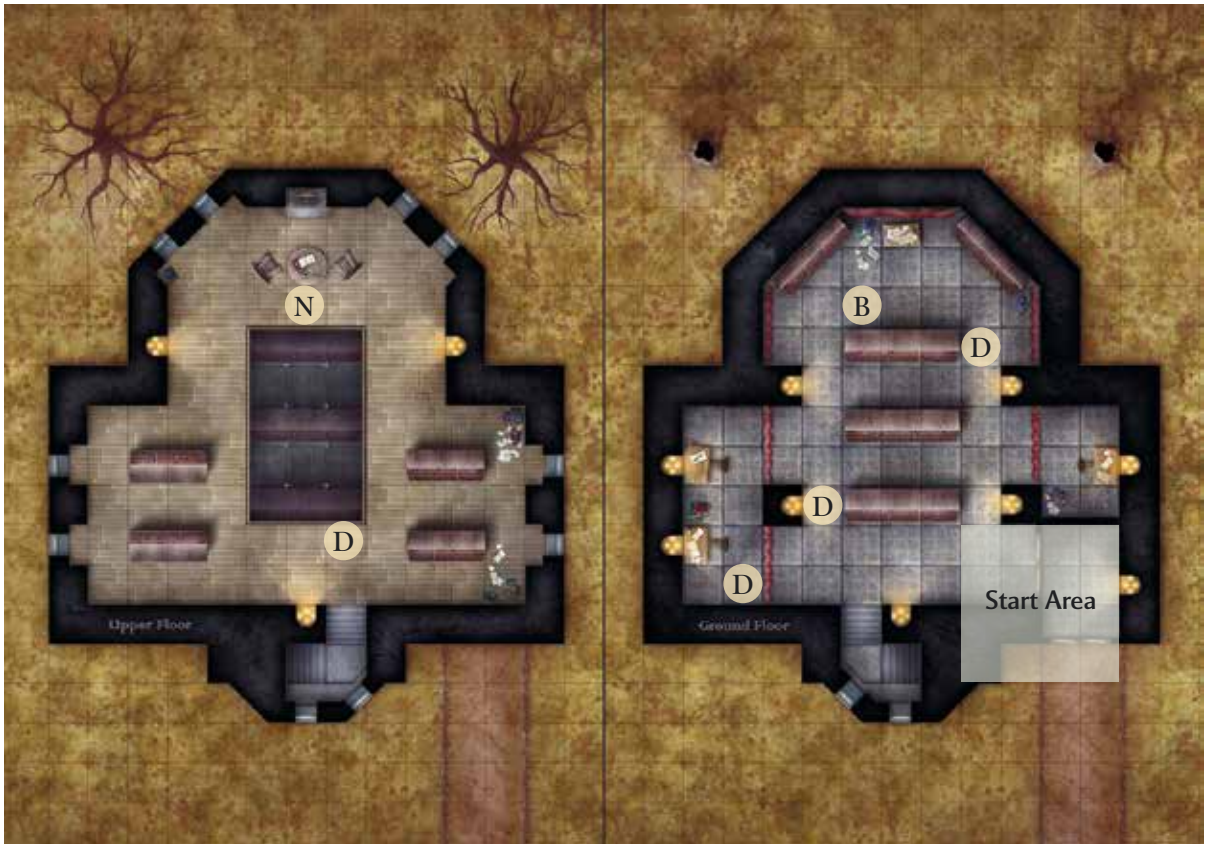
Curtains: These cloths block line of sight.

Doors: Interior doors are closed and unlocked.

Stairs: This stairway is difficult terrain.

Windows: The first floor has no windows. A character can climb the exterior wall to one of the second-floor windows 20 feet up. Doing so requires a DC 21 Athletics check. The windows are a tight squeeze. Entering one requires a DC 9 Athletics or Acrobatics check and 3 squares of movement.

Bookshelves: These are 8 feet tall and are blocking terrain. Climbing them requires a DC 9 Athletics check. A bookshelf can be pushed over.



Bookshelf	Single-Use Terrain
Standard Action	
Requirement: The creature must be adjacent to the bookshelf.	
Check: Athletics DC 13	
Attack: Close blast 3 (origin square adjacent to the shelf; creatures in blast); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Effect: The area of the blast becomes difficult terrain.	

Conclusion

When the characters defeat the monsters, go to Vontarin's Defeat, page 57.

4 Dusk Beasts (D)	Level 2 Brute
Medium shadow magical beast	
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22	**Initiative** +3
AC 14, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14	**Perception** +3
Speed 6	
Traits	
Two-Headed Guard	
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the dusk beast. While dazed, the dusk beast can take opportunity actions and immediate actions.	
Standard Actions	
Bite ✦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and the dusk beast can push the target 1 square. If the dusk beast can't push the target, the dusk beast knocks the target prone instead.	
Two-Maw Rend ✦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one prone creature); +5 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d6 + 4 damage.	
Triggered Actions	
Barbed Tail ✦ Recharge when first bloodied	
Trigger: An enemy enters a square adjacent to the dusk beast.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 2 (the triggering enemy); +5 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+3)	
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Reward

For interacting with Nathaire and battling him and the monsters, each character gains 250 XP.

Treasure: On the upper floor near the fireplace, the characters find a trunk containing possessions Vontarin recovered from the abbey grounds and crypts. It holds 800 sp, 120 gp, a handsome emerald (100 gp), a *+1 rod of malign conveyance*, and *+2 magic armor*.

Shadow Bolter (B)	Level 5 Artillery
Small shadow humanoid, dark one	
HP 50; **Bloodied** 25	**Initiative** +6
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16	**Perception** +9
Speed 6	Darkvision
Traits	
Combat Advantage (necrotic)	
Whenever the shadow bolter hits a creature granting combat advantage to it, the bolter deals 5 extra necrotic damage, and each of that creature's adjacent allies takes 5 necrotic damage.	
Deadly Precision	
The shadow bolter's ranged attacks have combat advantage against any enemy that the bolter's allies are flanking.	
Standard Actions	
Dagger (weapon) **✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage.	
Black Bolt (weapon) **✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes 5 damage each time it provokes an opportunity attack (save ends).	
Move Actions	
Dark Step ✦ At-Will	
Effect: The bolter moves 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks provoked by this movement, and gains combat advantage against each creature that it ends its move adjacent to until the end of the bolter's next turn.	
Triggered Actions	
Killing Dark	
Trigger: The bolter drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (No Action): Each enemy adjacent to the bolter is blinded until the end of his or her next turn.	
Skills Stealth +11	
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)	
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment dagger, crossbow, 20 bolts	

Nathaire, Possessed Mage (N)	Level 5 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human	
HP 64; **Bloodied** 32	**Initiative** +3
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	**Perception** +7
Speed 6	
Resist 5 necrotic	
Traits	
Deathly Presence ✦ Aura 1	
Enemies take a -2 penalty to saving throws while within the aura.	
Standard Actions	
Despair's Touch (fear, psychic) **✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Will	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target grants combat advantage (save ends). In addition, Nathaire slides the target up to 2 squares.	
Shadow Tendril (necrotic) **✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
Enervation (necrotic) **✦ Recharge** when first bloodied	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is enervated (save ends). While the target is enervated, it takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and any of its allies that end their turns adjacent to it take 5 necrotic damage.	
Miss: Half damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).	
Minor Actions	
Dark Imperative (necrotic) **✦ Recharge** when first bloodied	
Effect: Close burst 5 (one ally in the burst). Nathaire slides the target up to 3 squares, and the target gains 5 temporary hit points. Until the target has no temporary hit points, its melee attacks deal 5 extra necrotic damage.	
Skills Arcana +12, History +12, Insight +7	
Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+2)	
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 20 (+7) **Cha** 18 (+6)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Draconic	
Equipment robes, orb	

Session 13: Soul of Darkness

The characters have finally defeated Nathaire, capturing the ghost of Vontarin in the orb with which Nathaire had hoped to trap the soul of Evard. Begin by reading:

You have defeated Vontarin's ghost, and it has been drawn back into the orb possessed by Nathaire. It is still early in the night, and with the Shadowfell's grasp on Duponde growing stronger by the hour, it seems imperative that you deal with the orb and put an end to Evard's curse. What do you do next?

If the players tell you they want to take the orb to the cemetery and reunite Vontarin's soul with its mortal remains, go to the Reversing the Ritual skill challenge.

If your players aren't sure what they're supposed to do next, point out that a couple nonplayer characters might know more. Mother Grivelda, the wise woman, is the obvious choice. People like Grimbold or Tilda suggest the characters listen to her counsel. When the characters seek out the seer, go to Mother Grivelda's Advice. Brother Zelan can also steer the characters in the right direction. Just substitute him for Mother Grivelda if the characters go to him.

By the time they return to town, morning is approaching, but there is no sign that Duponde will return to the world.

If the characters want to examine the orb more closely, go to Vontarin's Soul. The characters cannot shatter the sphere unless they are in the graveyard. See Breaking the Orb if they shatter the sphere.

Mother Grivelda's Advice

If the characters seek out Mother Grivelda, she can tell them what they need to do.

You find Mother Grivelda and her grandson at their farmhouse, a short distance outside Duponde. The wise woman's eyes widen when she sees the orb you're carrying, and she quickly raises her hand in a gesture of warding. "Be careful with that, my dearies! A soul of great power—and evil—is trapped in that crystal. You must take it to its body and return it to the sleep of death. Only then might Evard's curse abate."

The wise woman's second sight is uncannily accurate. She knows what must be done, although she lacks the means and the will to do it.

How do we put the soul back into its body? *"You must bring the orb near Vontarin's resting place and reverse the ritual that the reckless young wizard began. Doing so should force Vontarin's soul out of the orb and back into its rightful place. He should sleep again. But hurry, my children! The sooner this is done, the better."*

We don't know the ritual. *"Are any of you trained in the arcane arts? Then you know enough to proceed. Prayer could be helpful, too."*

A character who has training in Arcana or Religion knows of a few general ceremonies, chants, or procedures that might work.

Can we just break the orb? *"That could work, but it's very dangerous. Vontarin's soul might try to escape. If you must, break it near his grave, and hope for the best."*

How do we abate Evard's curse? *"Evard's curse is meant to trap Vontarin's soul in the Shadowfell. As long as Vontarin's soul is not in its rightful place, Duponde is in peril of remaining in the Shadowfell forever. Return Vontarin to his resting place and reverse the ritual that reckless young wizard performed. Then Evard's curse should be put to rest with Vontarin."*

Vontarin's Soul

When the characters killed Nathaire's body in the last session, Vontarin's soul was forced into the nearest suitable receptacle—the orb of purple crystal Nathaire carried at his belt. If a character examines the orb closely, he or she can make out Vontarin's ghost trapped in its depths. Read:

When you peer into the orb, you can see the wrinkled face of a bald man with a goatee looking back at you. His eyes are inky black. "Let me share your body for a time," he whispers. "I can grant you great power! You have only to carry me with you until I find another host. Draw me forth from this orb, I command you!" The ghost wails in fury and misery. "Don't put me back in the tomb!"

Vontarin's soul can't respond to conversation. It can't see or hear outside the orb, and it only dimly senses the presence and thoughts of someone holding the orb in hand. For Vontarin to take possession of someone, the person holding the orb must deliberately invite the ghost to do so. In that case, Vontarin's soul seizes that person's body.

Arcana or Religion (DC 9): Vontarin's soul is held in the orb. With the proper rites, it can be transferred to a willing host or a suitable body. Outright possession and loss of one's own soul seems much more likely than sharing one's body with Vontarin's invading soul.

Insight (DC 13): The ghost would say anything to persuade someone to become its host.

Religion (DC 13): A disembodied soul is strongly connected with its original body. The ghost might not be able to resist returning to that body if the corpse is nearby.

Breaking the Orb

Returning Vontarin's ghost from the orb to the dead mage's bones isn't as easy as smashing the orb with a hammer and hoping for the best. Nathaire freed Vontarin's soul with a complicated ritual, and to undo the ritual's effects, the characters must carefully reverse it. If at any point the characters decide to break the orb while Vontarin's ghost is within, the attempt works only if the characters are in the graveyard near Vontarin's remains. The result is the same as failing the skill challenge in this session.

Skill Challenge: Reversing the Ritual

A pale, ghostly spark glimmers in the depths of the purple orb the characters took from Nathaire's body. They need to reverse Nathaire's rite and return the ghost to the remains of the dead wizard entombed in the mausoleum mistakenly known as Evard's Tomb. This skill challenge begins when the characters begin the ritual to return Vontarin's soul to his bones.

Level: 3

Complexity: 2 (6 successes before 3 failures). If the characters have successfully deciphered Nathaire's journal, they begin this skill challenge with two successes. In addition, Arcana checks in this challenge are DC 9.

Primary Skills: Arcana, Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, Religion, Thievery

Arcana (DC 13): The character helps perform a necromantic rite, binding the ghost of Vontarin to his mortal remains.

Bluff (requires the character to observe one Arcana or Religion success; DC 21): The character echoes the words and actions of a character who has succeeded on an Arcana or Religion check, contributing to the rite.

Diplomacy (DC 13): The character supports others who are engaged in Arcana or Religion checks, helping keep them focused and aware of the ritual's progress.

Insight (DC 13): The character observes the ghostly image in the orb, gaining a sense for which steps of the rite appear most effective, helping adjust the words and gestures for maximum effect.

Religion (DC 13): The character recites holy verses or prayers of protection, battling the dark power gathered in the tomb.

Thievery (DC 21): The character carefully damages the orb holding Vontarin's soul, facilitating the ghost's release at the right moment.

Success: Characters force Vontarin's soul from the orb back into the mage's bones. A fragment of the soul resists the transfer and necromantic energy infuses the cemetery, creating a number of monsters the characters must defeat. Go to the **Mad Ghost** encounter. Vontarin begins the encounter dazed (save ends).

Failure: The party botches the rite. Vontarin's soul leaves the orb, but it animates a number of monsters with intense necromantic energy. Go to the **Mad Ghost** encounter. Characters start the encounter taking ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends). If you are using the Despair Deck, have each player draw a card from the deck. Instead of a character having ongoing necrotic damage at the start of the encounter, he or she is affected by the card.

Concluding the Adventure

When the characters defeat Vontarin's ghost, they reverse Evard's curse. Read:

The unnatural dread brooding over the graveyard abruptly relaxes. You can feel life and color returning to the world around you. The curse entrapping Duponde is broken.

Congratulations! Your players have unraveled the *Dark Legacy of Evard*, completing this mini-campaign. Duponde's citizens are extremely grateful to the party, and the characters are treated as the saviors of the town for as long as they care to remain. If the players wish, feel free to roleplay the conclusion of the adventure, allowing the characters to interact with the people of Duponde.

Mad Ghost

Encounter Level 5

Setup

3 twig blight swampvines (T)
2 flesh-crazed zombies (Z)
Vontarin, mad ghost (V)

Impose the skill challenge results on the ghost or on the characters. If the party has a large number of 1st- and 2nd-level characters in this encounter, reduce the number of monsters by one or two.

When the encounter starts, read:
The sky grows dark and the wind rises in wild gusts. A dark, ghostly figure erupts from the crumbling orb and is then drawn toward the nearby tomb. Thrashing and wailing in a hateful voice, the ghost resists, but some of its essence rips away to the pull of the grave. Portions of ghostly substance go astray, bringing life to vines around the tomb and causing corpses to stir in nearby graves.

"I shall not return to death," the ghost screams in fury. "I'll destroy you all for this!"

Tactics

Twig Blights: These plants prefer to remain in their starting squares, using *vine snare* to grab and drag enemies into range for claw attacks.

Vontarin's Ghost: This creature is a hateful remnant of the evil necromancer's soul. It attacks aggressively, using *enervation* at each opportunity and *despair's touch* when *enervation* is recharging. Vontarin slides strong enemies into melee with allies, keeping weaker characters close by. With *dark imperative,* Vontarin slides allies into useful positions.

Zombies: These undead begin by clawing up out of their graves (a move action) and charging the nearest enemies. After that, they rely on *bite*.

Features of the Area

Illumination: It's dark. Light sources illuminate only half their normal radius.

Benches: These squares are difficult terrain.

Bushes and Hedges: These plants are difficult terrain, and their squares are lightly obscured.

Mausoleum: This tomb's iron door is open, and the building has no windows. The roof is about 10 feet above the ground at the edge. Climbing the wall requires a DC 19 Athletics check.

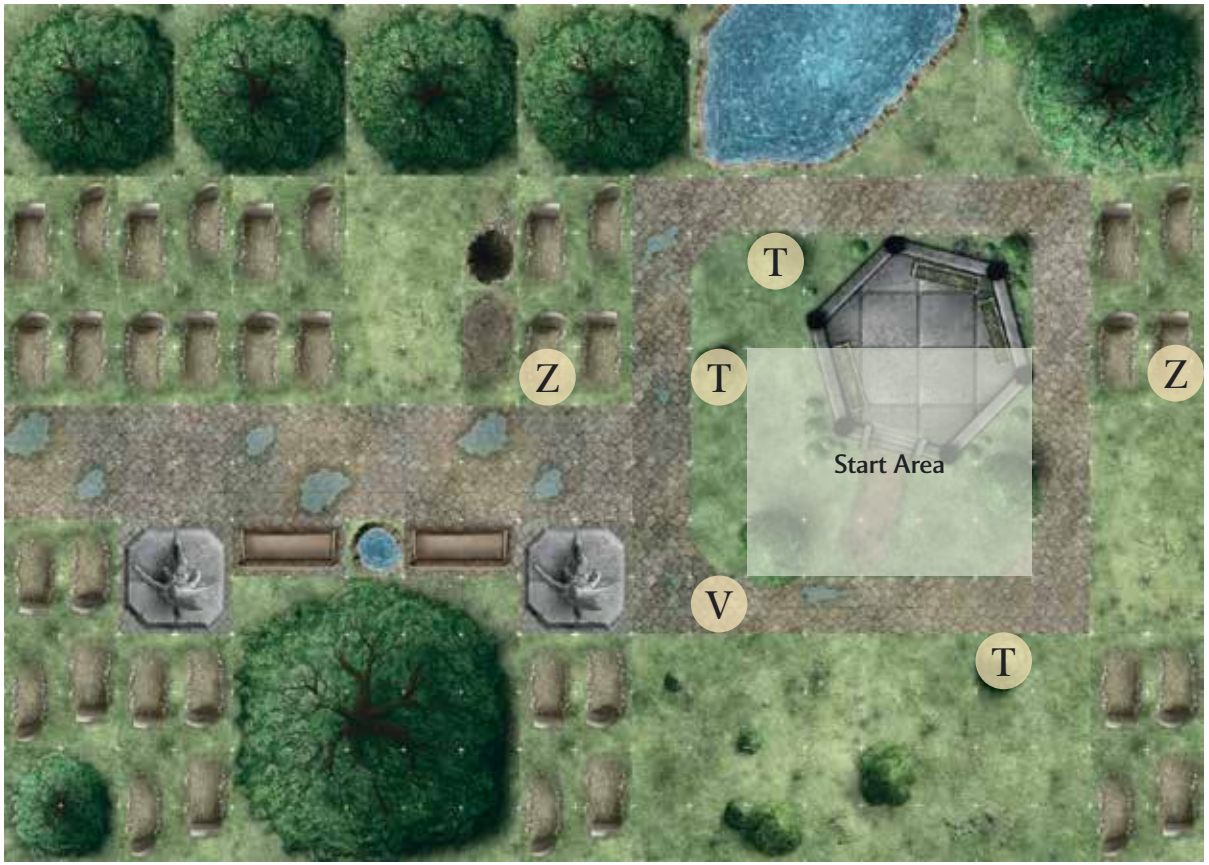
Open Grave: Creatures that fall in this shallow grave take 1d6 damage. Scrambling out of the grave requires 2 extra squares of movement.

Ponds: The water of the pond is difficult terrain.

Statues: The pedestals are 5 feet tall, and they're blocking terrain. A creature can climb to the top of one with a successful DC 8 Athletics check.

Tombstones: A square containing a monument is difficult terrain.

Trees: A tree trunk's square is difficult terrain. Climbing it requires a DC 8 Athletics check. The trees are about 20 feet tall.



Conclusion

When Vontarin is defeated, read:

The ghostly remnant of Vontarin's soul shrieks in agony. Its body breaks apart into tatters of mist, which flit into the nearby tomb.

The twig blights and zombies gain their dark vitality from Vontarin's ghost. Roleplay them as disturbed when Vontarin is wounded to give the players a clue to this end. They battle on for a round or two after Vontarin is defeated; then the energy animating them fades away. Any monsters surviving at that point collapse and die. When the encounter is over, go to Concluding the Adventure, page 61.

Reward

For facing the skill challenge, battling Vontarin and the other monsters, and breaking the curse of Evard, each character gains 500 XP. If a player has attended every session this season, his or her character should have 3,750 XP if the character has completed all possible quests.

3 Twig Blight Swampvines (T) **Level 3 Soldier**
Small fey humanoid (plant)

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +8
Speed 5 (swamp walk), climb 5, swim 5 Darkvision
Resist 5 poison; **Vulnerable** 5 fire

Traits

Rooted
When an effect forces the swampvine to move through a pull, a push, or a slide, the seedling can move up to 3 squares fewer than the effect specifies.

Standard Actions

Claw (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 poison damage.

Minor Actions

Vine Snare ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Melee 3 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: The swampvine pulls the target up to 2 squares, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 13).

Triggered Actions

Poison Lash (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy the swampvine is grabbing uses an attack power that does not include the swampvine as a target.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Melee 3 (triggering enemy). The target takes 5 poison damage.

Skills Stealth +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 10 (+1) **Int** 6 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Elven

2 Flesh-Crazed Zombies (Z) **Level 4 Skirmisher**
Medium natural animate (undead)

HP 55; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative** +6
AC 18, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14 **Perception** +3
Speed 6 (8 when charging) Darkvision
Immune disease, poison

Traits

Flesh-Crazed Charge
While the zombie is charging, its movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Zombie Weakness
A critical hit automatically reduces the zombie to 0 hit points.

Standard Actions

Club ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage, or 2d8 + 6 if the zombie charged the target.

Bite ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the zombie's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Deathless Hunger ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The zombie is reduced to 0 hit points, but not by a critical hit.
Effect (No Action): Roll a d20. On a 15 or higher, the zombie is instead reduced to 1 hit point.

Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 3 (-2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –
Equipment club

Vontarin, Mad Ghost (V) **Level 5 Controller (Leader)**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

HP 64; **Bloodied** 32 **Initiative** +3
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17 **Perception** +7
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover); phasing
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 5 necrotic

Traits

Deathly Madness ✦ **Aura 2**
Enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to saving throws. Vontarin slides an enemy that ends its turn in the aura up to 2 squares.

Insubstantial
Vontarin takes half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force damage. Whenever Vontarin takes radiant damage, he loses this trait until the start of his next turn.

Standard Actions

Despair's Touch (fear, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target grants combat advantage (save ends). In addition, Nathaire slides the target up to 2 squares.

Enervation (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is enervated (save ends). While the target is enervated, it takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and any of its allies that end their turns adjacent to it take 5 necrotic damage.
Miss: Half damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).

Minor Actions

Dark Imperative (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Effect: Close burst 5 (one ally in the burst); Vontarin slides the target up to 3 squares, and the target gains 5 temporary hit points. Until the target has no temporary hit points, its melee attacks deal 5 extra necrotic damage.

Skills Arcana +12, History +12, Insight +7
Str 6 (+0) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 20 (+7) **Cha** 18 (+6)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Draconic

COMING NEXT MONTH

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